

NEW STATESMAN

AUTUMN
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Ambassador College

NOV 21 1977

Like Gaul in Caesar's well-worn phrase, the French Left today is divided into three parts. There is the Communist Party, anxious to be accepted as a believer in democratic and pluralist values – but jealously retentive, none the less, of its reputation as the pacemaker of urgent social change. There is the Socialist Party, which after a compromised past in the sad years of the cold war has once more become the prime challenger to conservative forces and the potential keystone of a new popular majority. And there is the Left Radical Movement (MRG) which is a genuine party of reform while lacking any commitment to socialism.

The Left made a triumphant advance in the local elections of March 1977, and appeared to be on the high road to winning a majority when a new National Assembly is elected in March 1978. The dichotomy between such a majority and a conservative President presents a problem yet to be resolved; but the dominance of the Left on the French political scene would herald a changed climate, not only internally but also in the outlook for the European Community. When Labour Party delegates gather next month they should grasp that the news from Paris has a direct bearing on their chances of making the EEC into a positive force instead of an oppressive burden.

Disunity on the Left has been abruptly manifested – but has been approaching for months – because of the strains caused by the updating of the joint programme first drawn up in 1972. The Communists appear to be making the waves. They have unexpectedly embraced the French nuclear deterrent, which has few attractions for Socialist or liberal opinion. They have made bold – but perhaps impractical and demagogic – proposals with regard to wage increases and improvements in social services, making the Socialists feel that they are being pushed into the position of being the cautious partner. But the crisis has come over the issue of nationalisation. When M. Robert Fabre, the MRG leader, brought the negotiating session to a sudden halt by his walk-out on 15 September, he accused the Communists of seeking to force on the alliance a policy

'directed toward a sort of collective state capitalism'.

What did the Communists in fact demand? Originally they wanted the agreed list of candidates for public ownership extended to include the steel industry, oil refineries, and the leading private firm in the motor industry, Peugeot-Citroen – though this week they withdrew the two latter in an effort to reach a compromise. Secondly, they want the nationalisation of a given company to entail the nationalisation of its subsidiaries, which may be in a totally different line of business. Thirdly, they propose that further nationalisation should follow upon demands made by workers in any firm.

This last is the most interesting of their proposals – the *Tribune* Group must be kicking themselves for having never thought of it. It breathes the spirit of democracy and popular initiative, and it deprives the Right of its favourite talking-point: the claim that nationalisation is imposed by doctrinaire politicians against the will of the workers concerned. Moreover, it derives from a resolution passed at the Socialist Party – not the CP – conference in 1972. The wording was: 'In cases when the workers express the desire to see their enterprise taken into the public sector or nationalised, the Government may propose this to Parliament.' The CP readily fell in with the idea and now urges its formal inclusion in the joint programme. M. Fabre declares that 'the Government must be the judge of advisability'. A handy man with an apposite phrase, he adds that he cannot approve 'nationalisation à la carte'.

A comment drawn from British experience is relevant. The Labour Party has been wracked for years by disputes over which industries, or sections of industries, should be nationalised. Most of us would now say that the building of a socialist society depends not on the statistical size of the public sector, but on control of the economic levers and the ability to insist on changed values and priorities. That means power; the prerequisite for power is electoral victory; and the prerequisite for electoral victory, more vital than a perfect programme, is a spirit of unity.

Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Figures from the Past

This has been an interesting week for figures from the past. Jimmy Reid joined the Labour Party. Peter Hain joined the Labour Party. I met the latter on Monday during his lunch break, and he explained his reasons over a pie and beans. He and his friend Simon Hebditch, it appears, have become more and more interested in Labour philosophy as expounded by Tony Benn and the Institute for Workers' Control. They have lost interest in the Liberal Party mainly because, since the pact, its main function has been to keep the Labour Government on as right-wing a course as possible. Nothing worthwhile was being achieved by the Liberals. Hain was, I thought, a little nervous at the step he was taking – and so I tried to cheer him up. 'Don't worry,' I said, 'it's just like walking from one room to the next, only there's a rather low door in between, and you have to stoop for a moment in order to get through. Once you've got through to the next room, you feel fine.' After a little while Hain replied: 'The thing that worries me is not the stooping, it's that I'll go through the low door and step straight down into the dark.'

Oh dear, I've been looking at the case of Nicholas Scott, the member for Kensington and Chelsea, who also faces the possibility of stepping straight down into the dark. You may remember Hitchens's Law (NS 8 October 1976) which states that 'a politician who allows his policies to seem as if they are dictated by those of another party will fail with his own (cf. Jenkins, Prentice, Nutting, Boyle)'. The same law may perhaps be at work in the case of Scott. He was the Labour politician's favourite Tory. A colleague said to me the other day: 'If I didn't come from a Communist Party background, and if I wasn't firmly committed to the *Tribune* Group, Scott is the sort of politician who would make me want to vote Tory.' This paper once described him as the most liberal Tory; at his selection interview in 1974, the phrase was cast in his teeth: 'The NEW STATESMAN describes you as the most liberal Tory, Mr Scott. Would you agree with that?' A nasty way to begin an interview. (I must remember in future only to praise the Tories I most detest.)

There is something very Early Seventies about Nicholas Scott. He was one of a group of bright, handsome young things who favoured left-wing opinions and right-wing shirts. (Right-wing shirts: shirts with broad, shrieking stripes and generous collars, custom-built to contain varying quantities of right-wing stomach, provenance St James's, *vide* Peter Walker, Sir Richard Marsh, etc.) He was, in 1974, one of *Time* magazine's 'Faces for the Future', the statesmen of world stature. (Others were Shirley Williams, Eric Varley, Peter Jay and Prince Charles.) The press dropped in on his political break-

fast-parties. In Westminster he had a dining club nicknamed Nick's Diner. He was first Macleod's, then Robert Carr's, PPS; and in the last five weeks of the Heath Government he was Under Secretary of State at Employment. In the February election campaign Lady Macleod sent Scott her husband's cufflinks and rosette; he wore the cufflinks for good luck, but alas, his Paddington seat had been redistributed and he lost it.

When the Chelsea Conservatives selected Scott, they knew very well what they were getting; he had made no secret of the fact that he was on the Left of the party. He had been originally attracted to Macleod over decolonisation in Africa, and had recently been campaigning on such questions as housing. But what the party did not know, and what Scott himself has claimed that he did not know, was that in a year's time his marriage would be on the rocks. When his wife filed for a divorce, he made an attempt to persuade her to change her mind; but she told the *Express*, 'There's no hope at all of a reconciliation. His behaviour makes it impossible for me to continue the farce of living with him.' Much publicity was given to the judge's remark to Elizabeth Scott: 'I'm afraid you've been through a very unhappy time. You are still young and beautiful, and I wish you well for the future.'

So Scott was revealed as a cad, and not merely a cad but a disloyal cad, to boot, for in the month before the divorce came through he had become a founder member of the Tory Reform Group. He had campaigned for Heath, he had been dropped from the shadow cabinet by Thatcher, now – despite all protestations of loyalty – he was seen as part of a left-wing opposition. For Neville Beale, who is now chairman of the Chelsea Conservative Association, this would have been enough. Beale, a right-winger, had sworn from the start that he would be 'a thorn in the flesh' of Scott. In January of this year, the president, the

chairman, the treasurer and the vice-chairman gave their Member a grilling. What Scott told them may be deduced from Beale's own notes on the meeting.

Mrs Scott had said in court that she had at first stayed with her husband in order not to jeopardise his political career. Beale took this to mean that at the time of the selection in July/August 1974, the couple had deliberately concealed their problems from the Association. Scott replied that there had been no serious problems prior to that time, and that he afterwards had hoped, on the advice of friends, to be able to reach a reconciliation. Beale had been looking into Scott's business background, in particular a secondary bank called Throgmorton Securities, which had gone the way of many secondary banks; also St Clements Estates, of which he had become a director when Christopher Soames had sold his interests and left the country. Scott said that he had done so in order to assist with the rescue operation to the benefit of the shareholders. He denied any impropriety in his business affairs, and challenged Beale to find fault. It was only then that they came to political questions; Scott was accused of disloyalty to Thatcher, which he denied; he also denied that he wished to impede the deportation of Agee and Hosenball; and he justified his abstention on the Devolution Bill on the grounds that out-and-out opposition would lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom.

The cast of Beale's mind may be deduced from the fact that he has accused Scott of supporting 'causes that are not scrupulous in their methods, such as Shelter and Crisis at Christmas' – Crisis at Christmas was founded by Macleod – and of sponsoring 'the Housing Homeless Persons Bill, which caused great dismay in Kensington and Chelsea'. In May Beale wrote to party officers, telling them that some Conservatives were considering withdrawing financial support if Scott was not replaced at the next election. After gathering their opinions (many officers were violently opposed to creating what they considered would turn into a Tory version of the Prentice case), he called a meeting of the standing selection committee, which met on Monday. One of the committee members was unable to attend, and asked for a change of date, but this was not allowed. It is said that there was also some confusion over the wording of the motion, which, finally passed by 11 votes to 10, called for at least one other candidate to be considered for adoption. On next Tuesday, the question of reselection will be decided by the constituency party's executive.

Scott himself is not making any comment in advance of this meeting. His supporters believe that the attempt to oust him is largely politically motivated, but mingled with an unsavoury attack on his private and business background. I asked Mrs Thatcher what was happening to her MP. 'My MP?' 'Nicholas Scott is your MP.' Oh yes, she said, but would not comment further. When asked if she would be prepared to stand for reselection, she replied that anyone who wished could put themselves forward before her constituency association, but she did not think, at the moment, that they would have much chance of success.

NEW STATESMAN

Vol 94 No 2427

Published weekly at Great Turnstile,
London WC1V 7HJ Tel: 01-405 8471
© 1977

The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd

Annual Subscription Rates

By surface mail UK £12.50 Overseas £14
USA \$30

By air mail Europe £17.50 Middle East £19
Africa, India £20
USA, Canada \$40
Australia, NZ, Far East £21

For details of student rates write to The Subscriptions Supervisor at the above address.

George Cunningham*

Myths and Mandarins

The candidate sat nervously before his examiners at the end of the horseshoe table in the old Burlington House, anxious lest in this his final interview he should prove unfitted after all for service in the higher reaches of Whitehall. 'Tell me,' said the chairman, 'how much economics do you know?' 'Well,' said the candidate, 'I find bits of the *Economist* difficult each week'. The examiners laughed. 'So do we' they said. 'You say that you have heard Indian students claim that the British partitioned India to further our own interests. What did you reply?' - 'I said I didn't believe it.' 'A learned professor has said "the irrational is not always the unreasonable".' What do you think he meant?' Since the professor had been the candidate's own tutor, he was able to satisfy the board on that.

It was after that interview that I passed, 23 years ago, into the highest branch of the civil service. Now, a decade after the Fulton Commission condemned the amateur quality of our top administrators, the Expenditure Committee of the House of Commons has tried to prescribe reforms to give ourselves

a better bureaucracy, and Lord Crowther-Hunt, Whitehall's most single-minded attacker, thinks the amateurism is as bad as ever. Certainly a candidate can still enter our civil service with no knowledge of law, of economics or the processes of production and precious little about government and the political parties. And there are still senior civil servants for whom the world of the shopfloor, the council estate and the social security office is a closed book. The *Ecole Nationale* is as foreign to Whitehall as ever.

Whatever some media coverage might suggest, the report does *not* recommend fundamental change. A large part of its 50 pages is taken up with such esoteric points as whether the Treasury or the Civil Service Department should control staff numbers, whether civil servants should see their own annual reports, and should this or that percentage be knocked off their pay in return for inflation-proofed pensions. But Michael

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English, chairman of the committee, is to be congratulated on this: he has brought the whole business before Parliament, where it belongs. The doctrine of ministerial responsibility is given a well-deserved body-blow. That doctrine too often means Parliament will not hold civil servants to blame for faults which are notionally the responsibility of ministers, but will also not blame ministers for things of which they could not reasonably have been aware. The doctrine, says the English committee, was a 19th-century invention designed for a limited system of government and in future officials should wherever possible be directly answerable in public to the committees of the House of Commons - not just to provide information but to justify decisions which they have personally taken.

If that is to happen we shall need not only a redesigning of many ministries into accountable units, we shall need a system of Commons committees covering each subject area. The English committee says we must have such subject committees and the Procedure Committee, too, has moved strongly in that direction but will the House of Commons itself ever make the change? If there is resistance to reform in Whitehall, it is as nothing compared with the conservatism of the House of Commons. If the Michael Foots in Parliament prevail, there is no chance that the House will get the tidy set of subject committees without which both



"...YOU HAVE INVARIABLY BEEN TREATED VERY KINDLY. YOU HAVE NEVER HAD TOO MUCH TO DO; AND YOU HAVE ALWAYS HAD ENOUGH TO EAT." THIS LAST WAS AN APPEAL TO THE FAT BOY'S MOST SENSITIVE FEELINGS. HE SEEMED TOUCHED AS HE REPLIED EMPHATICALLY-"I KNOWS I HAS." "THEN WHAT CAN YOU WANT TO DO NOW?" SAID THE OLD LADY, GAINING COURAGE. "I WANTS TO MAKE YOUR FLESH CREEP," REPLIED THE BOY. (PUNNIK PAPERS)

ministers and civil servants will continue to be their own masters.

If the reader is disappointed at having only 50 pages of report to read, he can have his fill by dipping into the three fat volumes of evidence given to the committee. Harold Wilson gave the committee his views on Whitehall a year after leaving office. He takes a kindly swipe at Dick Crossman's obsessions about civil service supremacy. They don't fiddle the cabinet minutes, it seems. 'This was really one of Dick Crossman's - dear Dick's - heresies' says Harold. He still likes the idea of political assistants attached to ministers (and so did Ted Heath when he spoke to the committee) but they are best, he says, when they are the kind of people who could have been fairly senior civil servants anyway, not so good when they are 'purely political in their background.' All in all, Wilson comes down in favour of the civil servants. If a minister can't get his way in his department, well, as Attlee said, get rid of the minister. And if the cabinet feel frustrated at lack of progress on their plans that, as often as not, is 'because they have not worked out with sufficient precision when they were in Opposition what it is they want the civil servants to do'.

It is this satisfaction with the relationship between ministers and officials that is swept aside in the chapter that Brian Sedgmore tried to add to the report. He sees a battle between ministers and civil servants as a struggle for power to be compared with that between Commons and Lords, Government and Parliament, workers and shareholders. In this battle the civil servants arrogate to themselves the power that properly belongs to the people and frustrate their own ministers by going behind their backs, slanting statistics, and misinterpreting instructions. Bits of the Foreign Office have a 'Vichy mentality' and, as for the Home Office, it is 'stuffed with reactionaries ruthlessly pursuing their own reactionary policies.' These views were supported by 11 Labour Members of the full Expenditure Committee and only one Labour Member, Michael English, actually voted against them. Thus the Crossman/Marcia Williams thesis that Labour governments are frustrated in their socialist endeavours by a conspiracy of Whitehall mandarins is perpetuated and strengthened. History has often been based on myths and this one may prove as productive as others, but it is a myth and no amount of repetition will make it true.

Alex Lyon was one of the Labour Members who voted for the Sedgmore chapter. When he was Minister of State at the Home Office he was certainly prevented from pursuing the policies he wanted on immigration and race relations. The civil servants on the whole were against him; but that was not what stopped him. Roy Jenkins, his boss minister, was against him and that was what mattered. When Jenkins did support him - for example on giving male spouses the right to join their wives in this country - he got his way and no amount of civil service opposition could prevent it. But a boss minister can be frustrated too. If he cannot get the support of his colleagues in cabinet on a matter on which he has over-ruled his officials he will have the

irritation of knowing that the civil servants will be secretly delighted that he has failed. But he has failed because the cabinet was against him, not because the civil servants were against him.

The trouble is that there are some ministers, below cabinet level rather than in it, who couldn't argue their way out of a paper bag. In the presence of their party colleagues their resolve is strong, but put them up against their under-secretaries, who have seen ministers come and seen them go, and they cannot hold their own. There are ministers who are in the care of their departments, rather than in charge of them. That is not the fault of the officials. Their job and their duty is to argue the case for what they think is right. If they fail to persuade the minister they must desist, but it is not and should not be the practice that they should take the minister's policy before he reaches the Department as given and only argue within it. If that were the rule we should lose the combination of political

answerability and professional expertise which is the essential of good government. It always seems to me that the relationship between civil servants and ministers is best illustrated in the story of the Vienna orchestra and the visiting conductor. The conductor was trying to get the orchestra to play a piece his way but they went on playing it the way they knew. When the conductor started shouting at them, the leader got up, waved his violin about his head and uttered the worst threat he could think of: 'One more word - and we play it like you say.'

The real question is whether Whitehall's expertise in playing the pieces is as expert as it ought to be. The committee addressed itself to the question but did not go into it deeply enough - to the manifest chagrin of Crowther-Hunt when he tried to lecture them on it. It is because the Sedgmore thesis distracts attention from this issue that it is not just irrelevant but positively harmful.

Alexander Cockburn

The Fall from Grace

There was, indeed, something farcical about the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee's examination of Bert Lance's presumed financial derelictions last week. In a scene suffused with the aroma of Watergate - Senators earnestly grilling, witnesses energetically sweating, lawyers expensively listening - here was the second most powerful man in the Government fighting for his political life and that which is presumably most dear to him - his reputation.

But the Watergate witnesses were trying to absolve themselves from the charge that they had been undermining the Constitution. Lance, in front of a national television audience, was basically answering the charge that he had been running a cheque-kiting operation in some country banks in North-west Georgia, and thus was not quite the sort of chap one might wish to see in charge of the nation's Budget.

With at least \$100,000-worth of legal advice at his elbow, in the form of Clark Clifford, Lance slogged away with elaborate explanations of the sort no doubt familiar to tax inspectors across the world. The private plane-rides had been for business purposes. But plane-rides to football games? Lots of clients at football games. On and on it went: the harsh critical reports of Government bank officials of his business affairs should be reviewed 'in the light of the general situation prevailing at that time'; the questionable overdrafts had 'been paid off'; the matter of whether he had raised two multi-million loans on the same collateral 'could be viewed in two different ways'. It was all a little like watching Bobby Riggs playing tennis. The defensive lobs were sometimes wild but they landed just inside the baseline often enough, and the occasional backhand passing shot against one

or other of the Republic Senators reminded one that here was a tough country slicker who was not going to allow himself to be carted off to the political morgue without one heck of a struggle.

And millions of television viewers who would like bigger overdrafts and smaller taxes themselves stirred in sympathy with the man. Let us say he made a genial appeal to their baser selves. The Nixon gang had crewcuts and looked as though they were carved out of three-ply. Bert had the ineffable virtue of just not looking guilty. So he had sailed a little close to the wind, might indeed, in retrospect, 'have conducted matters differently'; but for those citizens not hotly indignant about the propriety of using correspondent bank accounts to raise personal loans he just did not seem to have done anything so terrible as to merit instant personal disgrace.

Such indeed was the reaction of a British Member of Parliament with whom I had a drink and watched some of the hearings. Why all the fuss, he murmured in a way that reminded me of similar foreign comment in the very early days of Watergate. Why, he went on, the commotion in the press, the furnaces of pious indignation crackling so fiercely? Just at the same time as this interrogation a friend called me from the White House. He ruminated to the effect that it was odd and sad that the Budget Director's fate would be settled in the media over the forthcoming ten days, that this particular court of opinion should enjoy such standing and such power.

Both seemed to be making the same sort of miscalculation. Namely, that people may be charmed by Bert Lance but still recognise snake oil when it is being peddled to them. All very well, that is, for a country banker to rise to the defence of good ole

country banking and the right of every citizen to pay as few taxes as possible; not so good for an Administration pledged to the very highest of moral principles to maintain that country banker in office.

Whatever may now happen to Lance the damage has been done. There is much debate as to why Carter has stood by him for so long. In my view there is no need to step into the exotic undergrowth of speculation about who has what on whom. Carter, on all the evidence, simply finds it virtually impossible to concede that he has made a mistake. But the damage goes back to his pollster's famous recommendation to Carter not to neglect style in favour of substance. Too obviously the President and his advisers have dithered during the affair, watching the popular jury closely while proclaiming that Lance must be 'allowed his day in court'. They were not always so generous. A non-Georgian nominee to the treasury was charged back in January with having temporarily charged about \$5,000-worth of home repairs to his company. His nomination was cancelled by the White House within two hours of disclosure.

It is the first truly obvious fall from grace of an Administration which made that happy state its most proclaimed ambition. Politics as usual. And when people start talking about politics as usual and all politicians as rogues they are settling back into torpor and cynicism about the possibility of better things. Such torpor and cynicism do not enhance any reforming impulse in the Administration.

Thus the major crisis in the United States at the moment is unemployment in the major cities, particularly for black people. The Administration has no urban policy and only now, after repeated denunciation from black politicians, is it beginning to pretend seriously that it has one. In this callous national political context New York Democrats selected Ed Koch last Monday to be the party's candidate next November and thus almost certainly the next mayor of New York. Koch made, as I have pointed out, the death penalty and the National Guard his answers to crime in New York and has dealt with unemployment mainly by attacking the unions.

The callous national political context has done more than help a Koch triumph with such distressing positions. This year has seen the increasing strength of a whole series of right-wing grassroots movements. *Anti* - abortion, equal rights for women, homosexuals, bussing, welfare, pornography, even car pools. *Pro* - death penalty, 'our' Panama Canal, nuclear power and (among many other things) saccharin. These movements are now most successful in pressuring Congress. The Left, in contrast, is fragmented and disorganised. What symbolic and indeed substantial initiative has the Administration offered in this oppressive context? Legislation barring the use of public funds for abortions - an act vastly invigorating to the forces mentioned above. It is not cheap to say that the White House's compassion embraces a Georgian banker but not poor women. It is true, which is why the Lance affair implies more than mere nit-picking about the state of Bert's checking account.

New York

Roger Omond

Kruger's Victim

'We always thought he was indestructible,' said a journalist friend close to tears. But not even Steve Biko could survive yet another spell of South Africa's detention without trial laws. Last week he died in Special Branch custody - the 20th known casualty in the last 18 months. The figure for deaths in detention since John Vorster, as Minister of Justice, introduced the 90-day law in 1963 now stands at at least 45.

Biko, confined by banning order to King William's Town in the eastern Cape Province and who had seen the inside of more prison cells and courtrooms than most, held a special place in the hearts and minds of millions of South Africans. He was the founder in 1969 of the South African Students' Organisation, honorary president of the Black Peoples' convention and recognised as the undisputed spiritual and intellectual leader of the black consciousness movement. His death, whatever to human tragedy, will certainly increase support for the movement which has already changed the face of South African politics.

Biko was also admired, and in some cases loved, by many whites. His humour, compassion and intellect attracted all who met him. Those who knew him flatly disbelieve that he died from the effects of a hunger and thirst strike, as Justice Minister J. T. Kruger rushed on to television to announce. Biko was a survivalist who saw no point in futile demonstrations, and refusing all food and water while in solitary confinement would have been the ultimate futile gesture. He was no stranger to detention. Of the past 13 months he had spent 137 days in prison cells without charge. He had been banned to King William's Town for four years, harassed almost daily by the Special Branch. He had the strength and intellectual conviction to take just about any treatment.

What is known about Special Branch treatment of detainees is scarcely comforting. Virtually every political trial includes charges of torture by the Special Branch. They were made graphically at an inquest

into one of Biko's closest aides, Mapetla Mohapi, who a year ago became the 24th person to die in 'security' police custody. But the woman journalist detained shortly after Mohapi's death is banned and her tale of torture cannot be repeated.

Biko's death aroused bitter anger throughout South Africa. He had the stature rarely accorded to black opponents of apartheid. Even Justice Minister Kruger appeared uncharacteristically edgy when he appeared on television. The next day he was back to his cocky self telling the Transvaal Congress of the National Party: 'The day before yesterday one of my lieutenants in the prison service committed suicide, but we have not blamed any prisoners for that.' A day later he said Biko's death left him 'cold'. 'I shall also be sorry if I die,' he said and burst into laughter.

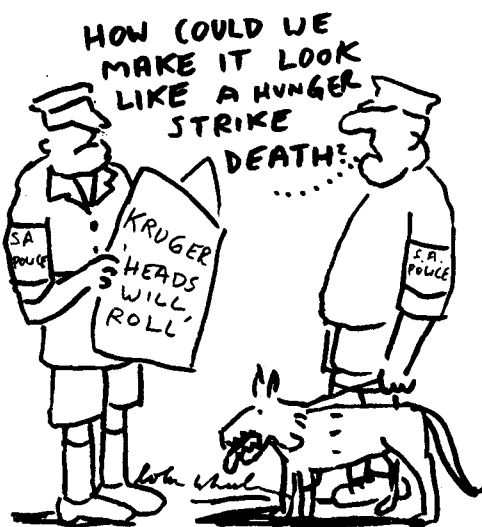
That is about the level of seriousness and concern with which Kruger chooses to handle the issue of deaths in detention. Another tactic is to say that detainees have committed suicide on the orders of the Communist Party, an instruction apparently dating back to the 1960s and whose authenticity has been challenged in court. It still has to be proved that the South African Communist Party has that degree of influence over so many detainees.

Kruger has consistently refused to appoint a Judicial Commission of Inquiry into detainee deaths as the toll rises and people are said to have slipped in the showers, fallen down stairwells and from sixth-storey windows and hanged themselves with shoelaces and denim jeans. Biko's death revived the calls for a Judicial Commission to investigate all the deaths. Kruger again refused.

There will be an inquest sometime. Many questions will be raised about what appears to be the malignant neglect of a detainee said to be on a hunger strike. Several doctors will be in the witness-box, too. They will be asked why, if Biko began a hunger strike refusing all food and water on 5 September, doctors called by the Special Branch could find nothing wrong with him two days later, three days later, four days later and six days later - when he is said by Kruger to have been examined. On the sixth day the district surgeon actually recommended that he be sent back to the police station cells from the prison hospital where he was supposedly being examined. A day later he died after being transferred from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria.

Steve Biko was not indestructible as we had thought. The man whom Donald Woods, editor of the liberal *Daily Dispatch*, said was a future black Prime Minister and 'quite simply the greatest man I have ever had the privilege to know' is dead. But the Vorster Government will regret the day he died.

East London



David Dale

Up to a Point...

White South Africa considers itself under siege as never before, and the symptoms of its paranoia are appearing in the unlikelyst of places. One of the symptoms occurred last month in Belgium, when the publisher of the magazine *To The Point International* (TTPI) sacked all but one of his journalists when they refused to accept South African propaganda in the magazine.

The mass sacking came a matter of days after various international pressures were applied to South Africa. France and Britain had accused South Africa of planning to test an atomic bomb, and President Carter had demanded that South Africa end apartheid or face retaliatory action from the US. The South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, had responded by saying: 'If these things continue and do not stop, the time will arrive when South Africa, small as she is, will say "so far and no further - do your damndest".' Vorster's words were echoed by the publisher of *To The Point International*, Hubert Jussen, as he ordered his journalists to leave, accusing them of being part of 'the world wide conspiracy against South Africa'.

Most of the journalists had been recruited in Britain early in 1977, and had been told that TTPI was an 'independent, balanced news magazine' with a special interest in Africa and the Third World. Taking that description seriously, they had proceeded to reject or rewrite any biased or racist material that was contributed from South Africa. But, as it happens, truth did not present South Africa in a very favourable light and, in the last week of August, publisher Jussen gave his staff the choice of accepting South African articles unchanged, or getting out. Eight of the nine TTPI journalists chose to get out.

Hubert Jussen is a Dutchman who has lived in South Africa for the last five years. He owns a magazine there called *To The Point*, which makes a great deal of money by telling the whites what they want to hear - that South Africa is God's own country, and that the rest of the world is populated by communists, impractical idealists and blacks like Idi Amin.

Most of the journalists recruited for TTPI this year had never seen the South African magazine until they began work in Belgium. They were horrified by it, but were solaced by the TTPI editor's assurance that the South African magazine was a completely separate operation from the Belgian magazine. It was also implied that the style of the South African magazine was a deliberate technique to attract white readers and advertisers - just a racist front to appeal to the local market. The same sort of commercial pragmatism would have led to the view that an international magazine, if it were to compete with *Time*, *Newsweek* and the *Economist*, must take

an international view of South Africa. But, as it turned out, commercial considerations were not the only forces operating on *To The Point International*.

My own experience may serve as an example: I am an Australian journalist with eight years, background as a feature writer and political correspondent in Sydney newspapers. Last January, I'd recently arrived in London and was working on a medical weekly when I saw an advertisement seeking 'Desk Editors' for *To The Point International* in Antwerp. I had never heard of TTPI and was not altogether sure whether Antwerp was in Holland, Belgium or Germany. But I applied, and, after two interviews, was accepted. I had been slightly taken aback at one interview when the editor volunteered, without my asking: 'There are people who will tell you that we are right-wing, or that we are somehow linked to the South African Government. We meet those charges head on. I can tell you they are completely untrue.'

He showed me the magazine's 'editorial charter' - three pages of extravagant prose about 'balance, objectivity, belief in democratic values, truth, chivalry, and independence'. I remarked that I agreed with it all, but that it hardly seemed necessary to spell out obvious journalistic principles so fulsomely. I should have realised that it was a case of 'protesting too much', but I suppose I was naive. And anyway I wanted to work in Europe.

I arrived about the same time as three other journalists, recruited, like me, to help the changeover from fortnightly publication to weekly. The old staff quickly told us that the two year history of TTPI had been clouded with regular rumours that it was partially funded by the South African Government. The management had on one occasion issued a statement denying any association with the South African Government. But the fact that the editor of *To The Point*, the Johannesburg cousin, had previously been a senior official in the South African Government's Department of Information tended to make the rumour more plausible.

But there was no indication of any efforts by the management in Belgium to censor or change what we were producing. After two months as a feature writer, I was asked to take over as chief sub-editor, since the previous incumbent was leaving for another job. At the same time, two journalists with extensive working experience in Africa were appointed - Roger Sargent to be the principal Africa writer, Harry Weir to be the news editor. The three of us began a policy of checking every piece of copy which was submitted from the Johannesburg magazine.

The material in *To The Point* (SA) was, at its best, dull and parochial, and at its worst, racist and heavily biased in favour

of South Africa's ruling National Party. There were frequent reports on the 'growing threat of communism' being spread by Cuba and Russia through black Africa, with horrendous descriptions of brutality by Marxist groups in countries like Angola and Mozambique. *To The Point* never missed an opportunity to ridicule Andrew Young, US Ambassador to the United Nations. The Afrikaners' hatred of Andrew Young runs deep, not just because he is black, or because he is outspoken, but for another, less publicised reason: for several years, Young has acted as foster father to the two eldest children of Robert Sobukwe, a black nationalist leader imprisoned by the South African government. The Soweto riots were treated as phenomena arising out of problems like inadequate housing and sewerage. There was never a suggestion that black anger might be endemic to the apartheid system and the government view of Soweto as just a temporary dormitory centre to hold cheap labour for Johannesburg. In all, there was not one article from *To The Point* which could be published unaltered in an international magazine. To publish them as written would have made TTPI a parrot of the South African lobby. So the TTPI staff rewrote them, or ignored them and researched their own articles.

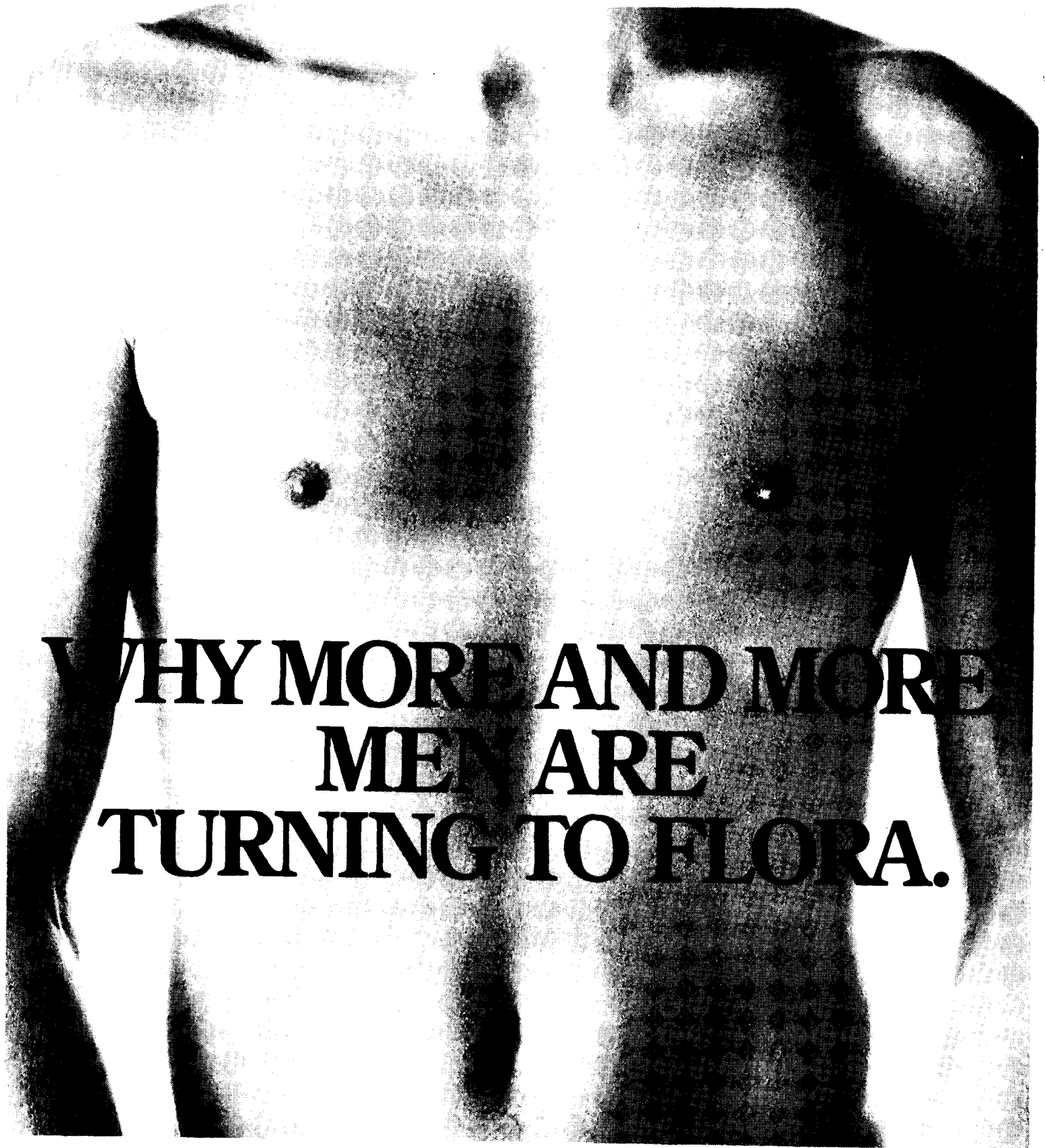
The journalists all signed a memo to the publisher asking for an assurance of greater separation between the two magazines, with the perhaps untactful comment: 'We regard *To The Point* (SA) as a magazine with an approach to news which is incompatible with accepted international standards of journalism.' Dr John Poorter, the editor of the South African magazine, was enraged by this, and retaliated with an accusation that the Belgian staff were 'distorting' the articles sent by his staff. The Antwerp staff treated this as a compliment. About this time, I gave eight weeks' notice, because I had been accepted for a political science course at the London School of Economics.

In the last week of August the publisher, Hubert Jussen flew up to Antwerp from Johannesburg for discussions with TTPI's editor. The editor, Gordon van der Merwe, had prepared a memo recommending extra staff and changed conditions. As the discussions continued for two days, the journalists ran a sweepstake on the outcome. Options ranged from 'payment of overtime and employment of extra staff, with clear statement that the two magazines are separate' through 'No replacement of staff, rely more on South Africa copy' to 'staff arrested and shipped to South Africa and imprisoned without trial'.

Gordon van der Merwe emerged from the meeting with the publisher with a memo which asserted firmly that the two magazines were *not* separate, and containing this paragraph:

While allowing for minor alterations, such as substituting dollars for rands, adjustment of length, etc., to make regional copy (i.e. from *To The Point*) suitable for an international audience and vice versa, copy should not be rewritten to give it a different angle or political line. This can result in complaints of distortion, as has recently happened.

The Antwerp journalists promptly refused to handle South African copy and to work



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FLORA. THE MARGARINE FOR MEN.

any more overtime. On Wednesday 31 August a sick-looking Gordon van der Merwe entered the office and said: 'I have been asked to convey to you that it will be necessary in the coming weeks to use more material from the South African magazine. I have been asked to say that you can either give us your full cooperation, or you can leave immediately, with no obligation on either side.' The staff agreed that they all wished to leave, but refused to sign resignation letters. After a discussion with a representative of the Belgian Journalists' union, Jussen agreed to give the writers four months pay in lieu of notice, or pay up the two (I was one) who were already serving notice. He ordered everyone out of his building immediately. Jussen then put an armed guard in the foyer, in case of anti-apartheid demonstrators.

Later, one of the journalists who had taken with him some old copies of *To The Point* found a statement written by Hubert Jussen on the role of the South African magazine. In a 'publisher's memo' in the

issue of 5 January 1974, Jussen wrote:

Southern Africa is under threat on all sides from 'world opinion', which, in turn is largely formed by news manipulators beyond its borders. The news material is designed to supply ammunition to the enemies of southern Africa - whether to the Kremlin or the World Council of Churches - with a view to subverting of White civilisation in the sub-continent. We believe that the world which is the victim of spineless laissez-faire on the part of the silent majority, needs a press that is constructive rather than negative; a press that defends Christian values, acknowledges authority and strives for moral principles in society. We aim to publish a weekly that will not be ashamed to serve and defend the interests of this part of the world. Southern Africa, an eldorado in many respects compared with deplorable conditions elsewhere, especially in Western Europe, is worth this defence.

If we had been shown this at our interviews, instead of a charter specifying honesty, accuracy and balance, none of us would now be looking back on the most bizarre six months of our lives.

Mervyn Jones

The End Is Not Yet

'It's been like this for eight years now,' says the woman behind the bar in the Capstan, a pub in the centre of Belfast. There are three customers this evening, all elderly men, drinking slowly and talking quietly. It must be eight years, too, since it was worth smartening up the pub. The plastic benches are worn, the wallpaper faded. Things look particularly hopeless tonight because bombs went off round the corner 24 hours ago, gutting one shop and damaging five others. But it's never much different, the woman says. 'Eight years,' she repeats - talking to a stranger seems to have brought home to her the length of the melancholy era through which she is living. Sadly, yet with a sudden intensity, she says: 'Ah, I wish it was ended. I wish it was ended.'

The end is not yet; on that, if on nothing else, everyone agrees. Out at Stormont, the Government information officer tells me: 'It's still a long road.' He has seen it all, and doubtless he remembers the several occasions on which brisk Army officers declared the Provisional IRA to be smashed, disrupted, defeated. Down in Falls Road, the IRA spokesman says: 'The whole thing is working itself out slowly.'

Belfast was never a city that attracted much admiration. Fine buildings and gracious private houses, of any period, are few. With loving care and lavish use of paint, certain streets might look like the streets in which English cities take pride; as things are now, no such effort can be expected. It's an overwhelmingly working-class city, and for the most part the working-class people still live in conditions that have become exceptional in England. These treeless streets, these cramped red-brick houses with

doors and windows opening straight on to the pavement, these back-alleys and out-houses, these poorly stocked corner shops - you seem to be looking at photographs in early issues of *Picture Post*. In fact, 30,000 houses in Belfast are without basic amenities.

In these older districts, the Protestants - the 'dominant' community - are as deprived as the Catholics. You observe only two differences between Shankill and Falls: the churches and the slogans. Here it's 'No Surrender', 'Remember 1690', or 'UDA Rules'. There it's 'Brits Out', 'Informers Beware', or 'Prov IRA Rules'. Catholics, when I comment on this universal poverty, say wryly: 'Well, you've seen what they're fighting to defend.' The unseen difference is that the Protestant slum-dweller is much more likely to have a job. It isn't reflected in any improvement of the environment.

Farther from the centre, you come to the council estates built since the last war. These include the IRA 'hotbeds', such as Andersonstown and Ballymurphy. The houses were meanly built in the first place, and the estates have a peculiarly soulless air because of the poor provision of community centres, leisure facilities or even shops. There's little incentive to maintenance, for a variety of reasons: the population has been transient; low incomes and heavy unemployment are the rule; homes have been ravaged by street battles and by the continual, often very destructive, army searches. So these 'modern' estates are merely the new slums.

Fairly recently, the Corporation has cleared a large area near the city centre - about a mile long and a mile wide - for development. Things happen later in Belfast than elsewhere, so this tract offers the same desolate picture as parts of Manchester or

Leeds in the 1960s. There's some sign of rebuilding, but not much yet. Part of the area is simply muddy soil and straggling grass, strewn with every kind of rubble. In a larger part, the houses have not yet been demolished; but all the people have gone and the work of ruin is being accomplished by roof-stripping, by rain and storms, by unchecked fires. To walk along such a street, bereft of any life unless a wandering drunkard or a stray dog, is to feel an indescribable loneliness. It is as though, at some climatic point in war, the city had been shelled and the inhabitants had fled to the countryside, leaving it to an advancing army.

However, there are empty houses everywhere in Belfast. There has, naturally, been the normal movement from the mean streets to the suburbs by people who can afford it. Then, about 40,000 people (mostly Catholics) have been driven either by threats or by actual violence out of what used to be mixed neighbourhoods. By and large, only middle-class professional people now have neighbours of a different religion. Then, other families, especially with young children, have chosen to get out of a danger zone. Then, again, houses have been 'hit' (the usual Belfast word) by bombs or have been the scene of fighting. Few empty houses are filled again, except here and there by squatters. Owners don't even try to find a buyer, you have to go a long way toward the suburbs to see a 'For Sale' board. Private landlords don't repair the houses or seek fresh tenants - indeed, many of them have ceased to collect the miserable rents and vanished. The result is that, in any residential district which on a London scale would correspond to Fulham or Kentish Town, something between a quarter and a half of the houses are deserted. Lest these houses should provide a haven for someone sought by the police, the doors and windows are filled not by metal sheets but by concrete blocks.

As the population diminishes, shops close - although you also see surviving shops, with an old woman dozing behind the counter, whose customers can't possibly suffice to make them viable. Cafés, social clubs and meeting-halls close much sooner. Pubs have been repeatedly bombed. In Northern Ireland (and in Ireland generally) pubs don't as a rule belong to brewers. It was traditional for pub-owners and their staff to be Catholic, even in Protestant areas. The pub was therefore bombed to drive out the Catholic landlord. A Protestant landlord having taken over, the pub was bombed in retaliation. This is not to count the many pubs, especially in Catholic districts, which have been bombed to injure or terrorise the customers. Almost all pubs now have concrete bollards to prevent cars from mounting the pavements, and some are enclosed by wire screens. The pubs are invariably unpainted and shabby, the windows boarded and the doors closed, and your first impression is that they've gone out of business. However, by knocking or ringing you can usually get in.

You meet few people in the streets - so few that they often greet you with a surprised but friendly air, as people do in quiet country lanes. Sometimes, on the other hand, they stare suspiciously. There's very

little traffic; sometimes you can look along a wide, straight main road and there isn't a car in sight. I'm reminded of past visits to East European cities when car ownership was a rarity; nowadays, you'd see heavier traffic in Warsaw than in Belfast. Litter is thick on the ground. Road surfaces and pavements are cracked, in places broken up. All telephone boxes have been burned out.

Despite the lack of traffic, Belfast is no paradise for the driver. Road bumps, reducing speed to walking pace, are placed at intervals on the main roads and also in some side-streets which are regarded with suspicion. At certain times, notably after an 'incident', cars are stopped and searched here. There are also metal gates, closed after 'incidents' and, in most cases, after dark. And streets which connect Protestant to Catholic areas are permanently closed by barriers 20 feet high. This is the so-called 'peace line' - in effect a Berlin wall, or rather several Berlin walls because some of the districts concerned are isolated enclaves.

Altogether, it's quite difficult to get around Belfast. Bus services are reduced because so many buses have been destroyed. Taxis long ago ceased operating in the normal way; you can get a hire-car, but only by phoning, and the driver may decline to take certain routes. You come to rely a good deal on the 'black taxis'. This simply means taxis of the London type, but extremely old and battered, which go along fixed routes, start only when they are filled (once it was nine people) and charge each person slightly more than a bus fare. They are confined to

Catholic or Protestant areas; in the former case, they are known as People's Taxis.

The city centre, because of its respectable appearance, is in its way as sinister as the slum streets. There are no parking meters because it is forbidden to leave a car unattended. You may see a wife waiting in a car while her husband keeps a business appointment, or a husband while his wife shops. All the shops have grilles, some open only when you ring the bell, and some employ security men to make body-searches of customers. The main shopping district is enclosed by a network of gates, at which everyone is searched by the police, while soldiers with rifles look on. Not far away is the Europa, the one modern hotel, which has been bombed repeatedly. It is surrounded by wire fencing and the only entry is through a security hut, in which you're searched every time. The calm in the foyer, without the natural crush of tourists and businessmen, is phenomenal. Businessmen prefer to stay in the outskirts or near the airport, and of course there are practically no tourists.

In Donegall Square, the heart of Belfast, three adjoining buildings are for sale. Round the corner in May Street, I stop to admire the Victoria Memorial Hall, built for the 1887 Jubilee. I read, carved over the portals: 'My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change (Prov. xxiv, 21).' A sound Unionist sentiment. But in my hotel Bible I check the text and find that the following verse is more prophetic: 'For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of

them both?' By the way, the Victoria Hall is for sale, too.

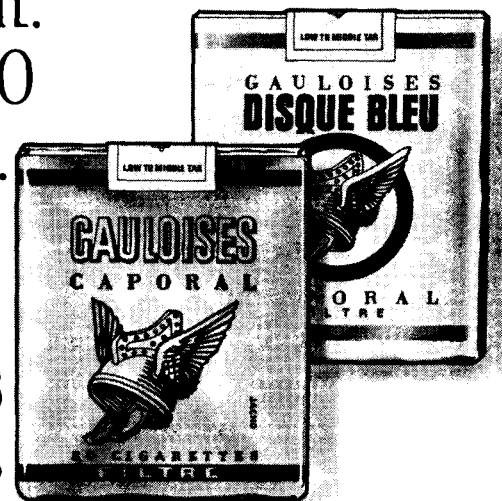
In the evening, the city centre is deserted. At the two surviving big cinemas, the last showing is at seven o'clock. I'd noticed a good restaurant and planned to have dinner there, only to find that it closed at eight. It wasn't dark yet; I took a stroll along Donegall Square South. A few cars raced along at 60 miles an hour. An army Land Rover patrolled, carrying soldiers with rifles pointing fore and aft.

My week in Belfast was, measured by many other weeks in the last eight years, a quiet one. But what keeps you on edge is that you never know when something may happen. The city centre was safe when I went there; the bombs went off not much later, and I heard the fire engines as I was going to bed. Next morning, I was being driven along Springfield Road and that was safe too. An hour later, snipers ambushed an army vehicle and wounded four soldiers. I was just as glad to have missed this, for the patrols have a habit of grabbing anyone who is in the vicinity.

How long can it last, really? A good many people (official British or Protestant) were talking about the improved morale of the police, the increasing number of arrests and convictions for terrorist offences, the comparative rarity of bombing incidents, and the mounting difficulties of the IRA. So far as I can judge, there's some truth in all this. There's also truth in what the IRA say: that half the violent deaths this year have been those of soldiers or policemen, as against one-fifth in 1976. The bomb squads

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What's that? Filtre? O.K. Filtre. More guttural on
the r sound? Filtre. Filtre. No? Feeeltre? Feeelterer?
No I've never tried Disque Bleu. O.K. Deesk Blur.
How? Deesker Blur? Ah! Blu. Deesker Blu. Really!
I've got it? You really think I've got it.
Great! Deesker Blu. Fine I'll have 20
Deesker Blu. You don't stock them.
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As defined by H.M. Government.

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are working at a low level (partly because of a shortage of explosives, as the Provisionals admit) but the snipers are doing well. And that's what guerrilla war is about.

IRA Aims

It's curiously easy to meet the Provisionals, when you recall other conflicts of this kind. If you wanted to talk to the FLN during the Algerian war, you went to Tunis. But in Belfast, I simply went down to Falls Road and sought the advice of a People's Taxi driver, who swiftly took me to the correct address and declined to be paid. I then had an illuminating talk with a young man who introduced himself as Peter O'Neill, adding with a smile that of course it wasn't his real name. Overtly, he was a spokesman for Provisional Sinn Féin, which is a legal organisation, but he made no bones about discussing the armed struggle as well as the political issues. The recent successes of the snipers, he said, were 'giving the people confidence'.

What struck me about this highly intelligent young man was that he talked throughout in Marxist language, as this would be understood by friends of mine in London or Paris, and proceeded from the assumption that the fight to 'get the Brits out' is a struggle against world imperialism and for a socialist victory. When I remarked on this, he said: 'Ah well, most of our supporters are starting from a simple nationalist position, but we're working to educate and politicise them.' I heard from other sources that many young radicals in the Catholic community, who would some years ago have found a home in the Official IRA, are now identifying themselves with the Provisionals. It's true that 'simple nationalist' attitudes are still dominant among the old guard of IRA commanders; it's easier for a Peter O'Neill to gain a position as a propagandist than to enter the inner circle which decides strategy and policy.

These distinctions would be brushed aside by the senior civil servant at Stormont who assured me that the Provisionals have long ceased to have ideals of any kind. 'They're committing criminal acts for criminal reasons,' he said firmly. I suppose he believes this, and Mr Mason believes it too. To that extent, they are ill-equipped to win the political battle.

How much convinced and voluntary support has the IRA among the Catholic community? I heard estimates varying from 2 to 20 per cent; obviously, one can't take opinion polls. There's also intermittent, sometimes impulsive assistance – for example, helping a lad to get away from the police although you don't approve of what he's done, because you've known him all his life and you don't want him to be beaten up. And there is IRA intimidation, which shouldn't be used (as it is in some circles) to explain everything, but which undoubtedly exists.

You'll find Catholics who are simply fed up with the violence and blame the IRA for it. This feeling generated the upsurge of the Peace People, which was surely genuine – but, now that they're seen to stand for 'peace without change', the Peace People have ceased to count. You'll find Catholics who rest their hopes on legal politics, as

represented by the SDLP, and see the gunman as a futile irrelevance. You'll also find Catholic left-wingers – such as Michael Farrell, prominent in the People's Democracy movement in the noble days of 1968 – who think that a concentration on armed struggle inhibits the development of a mass movement. You won't find many Catholics, however, who actually look forward to seeing the IRA smashed by the forces of law and order. The reply to that, as paraphrased by Mr Farrell, would be: 'If the Provisionals are beaten into the ground, so are we.'

The abnormality of life which I've described as affecting the whole of Belfast is only a part of what people have to endure in the Catholic neighbourhoods. There, houses are raided almost daily by the army (the favoured hour is 5.30 a.m.). A suspect, after being handed over to the police, can be held for seven days, and neither the family nor lawyers have a right to see him during this period. News of raids and arrests flows in constantly to Mrs Ann Murray, secretary of the Association for Legal Justice. Most of the arrested men, she told me, are taken to the police holding centre at Castlereagh. When she phones Castlereagh, she often has great difficulty in eliciting even the information that So-and-so is there. This year, she says, the police are being less forthcoming than ever.

Regrettable Cases

According to Mrs Murray, almost everyone who goes through Castlereagh is physically maltreated to a greater or lesser extent. At Stormont, I was told that there had been some regrettable cases in the past but these no longer occur – an assurance which might have been more convincing if such happenings had ever been admitted at the time. Mrs Murray, anyway, doesn't see that things are getting any better. Quite recently, two young men were taken straight from Castlereagh to hospital; they say that they were beaten up twice, at the army's Fort Monagh and then at the police centre, and one of them adds that an army doctor offered to re-set his broken nose. On 4 September a man appeared in court with a perforated eardrum and bruises all over his face; his wife shouted her indignation and was promptly arrested too. During the Turf Lodge disturbances at the time of the Queen's visit, five ambulances were needed to take away the people injured when Royal Marines broke into their homes; one woman had her skull cracked by a rifle-butt. Mrs Murray stressed to me that no soldiers or policemen have even been punished for acts of excessive violence, though in some cases regret has been expressed and compensation paid. I talked to Mrs Norney, whose 17-year-old son was shot dead two years ago, and who says that when she got the body back she saw that the fingers had been trodden on. It's admitted by the army that the boy was innocent, the Chief Constable has described the killing as 'a ghastly mistake', and the mother has been offered £3,000. She is demanding that the soldier who fired the shot should be punished. Mrs Murray thinks that Mrs Norney won't get anywhere.

It's always possible that the Association for Legal Justice is an IRA front; that

charge is bound to be made against an organisation which devotes itself to publicising the alleged misdeeds of the army and police. If it were true, it wouldn't make much difference. Mrs Murray, I felt sure, is a compassionate woman genuinely appalled by the sufferings of the people who are her neighbours. (In 1972 she saw the man who lived two doors away shot down by fire from a passing car while he was chatting with a friend; responsibility was traced to a plain-clothes military patrol and the widow was paid £20,000.) If she has been drawn into supporting the IRA as a resistance movement – which I do not assert – then this would be further evidence of the alienation of Catholics from authority.

Men Without Work

Catholics in Northern Ireland, one must remember, have no tradition of respect for law and order. (Protestants have, which is a constant handicap to extra-legal bodies on that side of the fence.) At no time since 1920 have they felt a moral obligation to recognise the state within whose borders they live, or its Queen, or its laws, or the authority of its police. The experience of living under a military occupation confirms their resentment. It's not easy for an outsider to share these feelings, but I felt some identification when soldiers moved through the Rock Bar in Falls Road while I was drinking there. 'The worst thing is when they start talking to you,' Michael Farrell said. 'If you chat with them, everybody else draws away and wonders what's up with you. If you're rude, you get pulled in.'

And then, what must never be forgotten is the emptiness and dreariness of life for people who can only pass their time in drinking and mulling over news and rumours, because they have no work. In Ballymurphy, unemployment is at 50 per cent; the other Catholic districts are not much better.

It's conventional to deplore unemployment for conventional reasons: young men growing up without hope are a prey to anti-social attitudes, and to the IRA in particular. This glosses over the essential point – that the plight of Ballymurphy is seen as proof of the enforced, enduring inferior status of the minority community. Last week there was some stir over a statement made by Father Myles, parish priest of Ardoyne, a Catholic district surrounded by Protestant areas. He said that unemployment was deeply rooted in Ardoyne (it's about 40 per cent) while Protestant headmasters could normally place their school-leavers in jobs. The headmasters, and other Protestant spokesmen, hastened to declare that they didn't find things at all so easy and that the real problem is the overall recession. The argument continues, but the figures seem to support Father Myles, since the unemployment percentage in North Belfast (of which Ardoyne is a part) is roughly that of the United Kingdom as a whole.

So long as the sense of oppression and injustice persists, some at least of the young men born into these conditions will be drawn to the IRA. To consider them tragically mistaken is reasonable; not to see what impels them argues a sad lack of imagination. That, when all's said and done, is why the end is not yet.

Christopher Price

A Voice for Parents

The Taylor Report*, which recognises the right of parents to regain access to their children's education, is the first official educational obeisance to democracy for a century. Compulsory education was introduced just over 100 years ago to save children from their parents: since then the whole system has been suffused with oligarchic values; headmasters, inspectors, edu-bureaucrats, local bigwigs have all pontificated on how the system ought to be run and have been charged with the job of running it.

Now a committee of 24 such folk – including four professional parents – have suggested a substantial shift of power in the control of our schools. It was set up by Reg Prentice nearly four years ago – or, more accurately, by his expert amanuensis of that era, Professor Maurice Peston – under the chairmanship of a modest Blackburn manufacturer and Labour worthy, Mr Tom Taylor.

In place of the present diarchy under which teachers and local authorities divide the job of organising the schools and the curriculum between them, the Taylor Committee proposes revamped governing bodies, composed on a new quadratic principle: councillors, teachers, parents and 'the community'. The teachers and the parents are to be elected by their peers, and the *communards* co-opted by everyone else. The parents' election will have to be by secret ballot and only those with children still at the school in question will be eligible for election. (At the very least this should generate somewhat less geriatric governors.) About the 'representatives of the community' the committee is rather more vague: the local authority is to draw up the lists and the rest of the governors co-opt the ones they want.

It is not a wholly convincing formula, and there is no guarantee that it will produce folk very different from those in the present system – under which all too often the political parties distribute co-options on governing bodies as consolation prizes to those of their faithful who have not quite made it in the local elections. True, this principle has been eroded in recent years as parents and teachers won places as of right on governing bodies. But the Conservatives are now tightening up; they have now made it clear in Kent and Humberside that parents who vote Labour are ineligible for co-option. The whole thrust of the report is in the other direction – away from political and towards community control, and has caught the Conservatives red-handed with their political fingers scrabbling in the educational till.

So the new proposals should make some difference. Though the parental elections may throw up a number of lady-bountiful types, the new role will change the rela-

tionship between the school and the parent governors – from appointed oligarch to elected democrat; it will be less easy for the headmaster and the education officials to patronise them into pliant silence.

More important are the committee's proposals about introducing democracy into the staff room. Up until a few years ago the head teacher alone attended meetings of the governors, who received accordingly a peculiarly-angled bird's-eye view of what went on in the school. Recently a single assistant teacher has been allowed in some areas, often in the face of the head's opposition. Taylor proposes a whole array of ordinary teachers (elected by the staff as a whole) with representatives of the cooks and caretakers if the governing body is big enough. It is a wholly new *mélange* which will inject certainly fresh friction and perhaps even a welcome reality into the often self-interested meetings of these august bodies.

Or will it just be frustration? There is little point in investing newly-elected folk with newly-invented talking-shops unless they have something coherent to do there. Exactly the same argument applies to school governors as has been used of the European Parliament and the Scottish Assembly; even Taylor's proposals don't offer school governors much financial autonomy; and with fewer pupils, less public money and increasingly centralised managerial control in local authorities, governors in the future will inevitably have less, rather than more, leeway in deciding where the money goes. In a scathing note of dissent, Peter Fulton, chairman of Cleveland Education Committee, says all this in dismissing most of his colleagues' ideas as a load of hot air. He wants to maintain the strict control of the local council and the authority of the head in the tough days to come.

Control of the budget, however, ceased to be the nub of the educational argument with the Prime Minister's speech at Ruskin last year. The 'great debate' is about curricular, rather than financial, stringency; and the Taylor proposals will be judged on their impact at the chalkface. Taylor wants the local community to monitor educational progress towards stated objectives. It sounds good; but will an average bunch of volunteer governors be equal to the task? Will the teachers let them any nearer control over the curriculum than they do at present? Much of the reaction to the 'great debate' has been for greater rather than less central control.

I am an optimist and suspect that monitoring of this kind will be wholly healthy. It will raise a few hackles and no doubt generate a few howling public disputes which could make William Tyndale seem positively amicable. But it will enforce a degree of hitherto unknown accountability upon teachers in a way which a strengthened centralised inspectorate could never achieve.

Taylor also raises the question of giving governors teeth. He would like to make it easier to shunt off unsatisfactory teachers – while making it more difficult to do the same to children who make a nuisance of themselves.

The report comes at a convenient time for both Shirley Williams and James Callaghan. The 'great debate' on education always had a political edge to it. Launched as the Conservatives were posing as the parents' friend (always a far-fetched myth – it was Labour Sheffield and Labour London who started the trend of parent representative governors), it succeeded in blunting the thrust of the attack; the report now gives Shirley Williams a heaven-sent opportunity to develop the job of putting into practice the curricular reforms she so badly wants.

True, her officials and the local authorities will be sour towards the whole idea; so, in all probability, will the headmaster-dominated teacher unions. Moreover many of their dire prognostications may turn out to be true. Some governing bodies will be progressive, others reactionary, others just not up to it. It will make the muddle of the English educational system even more difficult for foreigners – particularly Frenchmen – to unravel. But it is founded on the excellent principle of democratic accountability to the community, possible for the first time now that comprehensive education has brought community schools to England and Wales. In an increasingly bureaucratic world it is a risk worth taking.

Encounter

'One of the few great
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Annual subscription £8.75 (\$21.00)

**ENCOUNTER 59 ST. MARTIN'S LANE
LONDON WC2**

*A *New Partnership for our Schools*, HMSO £3.25.

Ben Pimlott

Power to the People?

What difference would it make, should the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy succeed in its demands for the regular re-selection of Labour MPs and a wider selectorate for the party leader? Probably a great deal: but if an earlier attempt to give power to the rank-and-file is anything to go by, not necessarily in ways that campaigners, or opponents, expect. Indeed CLPD militants might consider the effects of the last really big change in the party constitution, adopted 40 years ago – the creation of a seven-man section of the National Executive directly elected by local party delegates instead of by the whole of conference.

The 1937 revolution was the culmination of a grassroots campaign very similar to this one. The 1930s Constituency Parties Movement achieved its main goals because of a widespread mood of local resentment – captured and channelled by an unknown parliamentary candidate called Ben Greene. Despite the explosive growth of individual membership in the early Thirties (doubling between 1928 and 1936) the local parties had no representatives on the NEC who did not owe their seats to big union votes. Occasionally unions magnanimously backed somebody with strong local party appeal – a Lansbury or a Cripps. More often membership of the National Executive reflected union reluctance to take risks. In the heady campaigns of the middle of the decade, the NEC often seemed the essence of narrow-minded respectability, incapable of vision or initiative, and mainly concerned to reprove and discipline party members who stepped out of line with all the tight-lipped prudery of a Victorian governess.

When Greene created a rank-and-file pressure group in 1935, demanding directly elected places on the NEC, Transport House was not amused. But the response from the constituencies was overwhelming. At the Edinburgh Party Conference in 1936, Greene was able to assemble 200 out of a possible 280 constituency delegates at a protest meeting which called unanimously for immediate action. This organised, united revolt on an issue which cut across ideological battle-lines forced the NEC to retreat and agree to consider the matter, which hitherto had been dismissed out of hand; and the following year Hugh Dalton, privately sympathetic, used his position as party chairman to persuade his National Executive colleagues of the desirability of reform. After a tense debate at the Bournemouth Conference in 1937, and some busy horse-trading with Ernie Bevin and the TGWU, the constitution was amended and the local activists came into their own.

Yet what is striking is how far the consequences of the change were at odds with predictions at the time. NEC opponents of the scheme were afraid that it would result in a constituency section composed of seven professional agents, pursuing their own

special interests. In fact no agent has ever been elected by the local parties. Greene and his associates wanted some true rank-and-filers, putting the activists' point of view, especially on matters of organisation. That did not happen either. The first crop of directly elected representatives included three dons (one an Etonian) and two rich barristers (both Wykehamists), knocking off an established (working-class) member of the Executive. Such, indeed, has been the deference voting of delegates that of 25 men and 2 women elected to this section of the NEC in the last 40 years only one (Laski) had never been an MP – though Tom Driberg continued to be elected while out of the House between 1955 and 1959.

What the reform *did* do was make the Executive a much more powerful body, and, after a long time-lag, immensely strengthen the Labour Left. Before 1937, the NEC, broadly speaking, had been composed of mediocrities. Its trade union and women members were mainly undistinguished; the (conference-elected) so-called constituency section seldom contained more than two or three major leaders. Direct election to this section and its expansion from five to seven injected some much needed talent, and also strongly reasserted links with the PLP which in the 1930s had become very weak indeed. In addition, the annual 'beauty contest' for the constituency section soon became a recognised barometer of the fortunes of warring factions in the party at large. Hugh Dalton felt that the new method of election initially worked 'up to a point, rather conservatively', and for a while old stagers like Morrison, Dalton himself, Jim Griffiths, Philip Noel-Baker and George Dallas were regularly

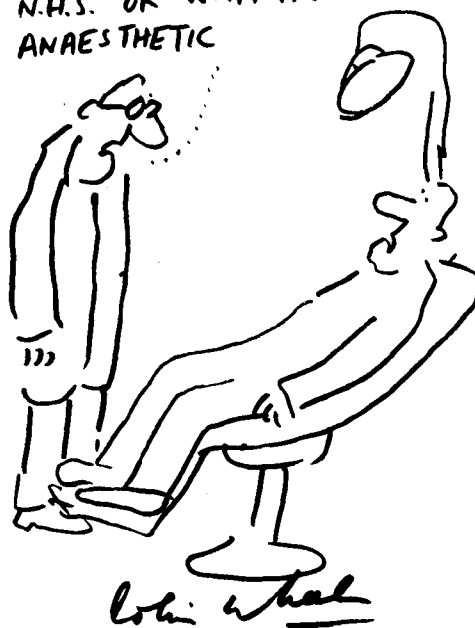
re-elected. Then, with the post-1945 honeymoon over and the CLPs growing fast once again, Establishment heads began to roll and the NEC places were filled by Jacobins of a younger generation. Bevan had been on since 1944; Driberg joined him in 1949, Mikardo a year later. In 1951 Barbara Castle pushed Shinwell off, and at Morecambe the following year Crossman and Wilson shifted Dalton and Morrison (both members since the 1920s), ditching Morrison's chances of ever succeeding Attlee as leader. From then on, right up to the present day, and with the current PM and Chancellor of the Exchequer practically the only exceptions, 'Division III (Constituency Labour Parties)' has been a Bevanite, unilateralist, Clause Fourist, anti-Marketeer, Tribuneite closed shop.

The effect on party debates (especially since the changed inclinations of some major unions began to bring more left-wingers on to the Executive in other sections) has been massive. So has the effect on the distribution of power. Could Barbara Castle or Richard Crossman have carried such weight in cabinet if they had not both been long-serving NEC members, and past chairmen, before either of them ever held ministerial office? Would either Wilson or Callaghan have been elected to the leadership without a similar background of proven grassroots popularity? It is hard to say. What is incontrovertible is that the handful of politicians whose names have appeared on page one of the Report to Annual Conference as regularly as the seasons – Mikardo (26 times), Castle (26), Driberg (23), Greenwood (16), Benn (16), Crossman (16), Allaun (10), Lestor (10) – have been able to exert a crucial influence: helping to shape the policy decisions and recommendations which a Labour cabinet can never quite ignore. They hold a special authority that election to any purely parliamentary committee never bestows.

The extent of left-wing advantage was certainly not envisaged by Dalton, nor by the right-wing union bosses when they gave their grudging consent in 1937 to the change. Least of all was it anticipated by Ben Greene, who had opposed the formation of the left-wing Socialist League and whose relations with the Labour Left were never easy (actually he had a strong sympathy for the Nazis, who he believed to be more socialist than nationalist).

What prospect, then for today's constitutional reformers? Most supporters of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy probably want to give Labour a further leftward shove, and if their demands were met, they would probably succeed in the short run. The long term is another matter. Giving conference a say in choosing the party leader, for example, or even giving constituency management committees more power are steps which don't necessarily benefit the Left permanently. Conference is union controlled, and so (potentially at least) are many GMCs: what if the trade union leadership, already less militant than four or five years ago, should revert to its traditional 'moderate' loyalties? It took Dalton 15 years to be hoist by his own petard. The present campaigners, if successful, might come to regret their current interpretation of 'party democracy' a lot sooner.

YOU CAN HAVE IT
EXTRACTED ON THE
N.H.S. OR WITH AN
ANAESTHETIC



London Diary

□ Mr John Knowles, the zoo owner near Winchester, said more than once that he was 'puzzled' at the enormous public interest in the plight of his giraffe, Victor. So was I. The romantic angle, I suppose, explained a bit – were those three lady giraffes really too much for poor Victor? But there must be something more behind the obsessive fascination that Victor exerted over the whole country for nearly a week. My theory is that the British public saw him as a symbolic figure – a sedentary model, as it were, of the British economy. We saw in Victor a mirror of ourselves, uncomfortable on our knees but somehow lacking the will to get up. Looked at in this light, the whole story becomes a parable – with the winches, hoists and canvas slings playing the role of North Sea Oil. Of course we must all hope that we have better luck than Victor but I have a gloomy foreboding that what happened at Marwell Zoological Park this week told us our own future.

□ Did Conor Cruise O'Brien deliberately set out to put the cat among the pigeons at last weekend's Anglo-Irish conference at Oxford? The most astonishing aspect of his 'no demand for Irish unity' speech, delivered at the always risky time of after dinner, was the relative silence in which it was heard: no bread rolls flew and the only 'incident' came at the end when Austin Currie of the SDLP rose to demand the right of reply. The Unionists, understandably, were ecstatic: it was the correspondent of the *Belfast Telegraph* who first persuaded the never exactly bashful O'Brien to release the full text of his speech for publication. But it is the way of journalists to keep a wary eye on each other and thus the first news of the speech came *via* the indefatigable W. D. Flackes on BBC Radio on Sunday. It took till Tuesday for the British papers to catch up, though the *Irish Times* 'splashed' the story on Monday morning. Not that O'Brien's thesis convinced all those who originally heard it – some of whom had in fact listened earlier in the day to a warning by Lord O'Neill of the Maine against the danger of placing any faith at all in poll figures in Irish politics. He recalled how early in 1969 he received a phone call from the self-same *Belfast Telegraph* congratulating him on having 80 per cent of the people of Northern Ireland behind him. 'Four months later,' he added ruefully, 'I found myself booted out.'

□ For my money the star of the conference anyway was not Senator O'Brien but Richard Francis, the Director-designate of News and Current Affairs for the BBC. He's just completed four years in Northern Ireland and seems to have come through not just personally unscathed but professionally unscarred as well. He delivered a splendid onslaught on the politicians' notion of there being such a thing as 'selective objectivity', and I only wish Airey Neave (to say nothing of Roy Mason) had been there to hear it. He was candid, too, about the BBC's difficulties with the minority community in

Northern Ireland in being known as the *British Broadcasting Corporation*, though he was plainly nettled by the NS's charge that at the time of the abortive Ulster Workers' Strike last May the BBC's Belfast reporters had served as 'models of reassurance'. Indeed, he admitted that what worried him then was the volume of compliments that the BBC had received on 'the grand job it had done': those who took that attitude were, he bluntly said, making the oldest mistake in the book – 'praising the messenger who brings the good news'. There can be two views as to whether the BBC really requires a 'supremo' for its news and current affairs coverage; but since from next week it's going to have one anyway, I am glad it's turned out to be Dick Francis.

□ John Pardoe could, I thought, have managed a more graceful farewell to Peter Hain and Simon Hebditch than the one he produced – which was of the good riddance to bad rubbish variety. We shall probably never know what David Steel would have said, since the Liberal deputy leader appears to be holding the fort; but I doubt if any *vale* from him would have been couched in such oafish terms. Still, Pardoe has little reason to feel fond of Hain – his support for Steel in the leadership election last year having somewhat blunted the Pardoe/Cyril Smith assault on Steel as the 'Establishment candidate'. I'm told that Hain tried hard to make sure that Steel heard of his and Hebditch's resignation from them before reading of it in the newspapers; and it was only the *Guardian's* 'exclusive' on Tuesday morning that made that go wrong. But the allure of publicity for the camp-followers of politics is half the trouble and my own fear is that all this party swapping may soon get out of hand.

□ An interesting footnote to last year's struggle over the future of the *Observer*. Apparently on the first Sunday of this month, when the *Sunday Express* did not come out, the *Observer* picked up more casual sales than both its two 'quality' rivals combined. It attracted a cool 70,000 *Sunday Express* customers just like that. A proof, then, that Vere Harmsworth was right last October and that the *Observer's* future lies in vying with the *Sunday Express*? Or, again, a justification for Atlantic Richfield's and Lord Barnetson's alleged belief that the paper now should move to the Right? I'm sure there will be those within the *Observer* eager to embrace either view, or possibly both. But there is, I suspect, a simpler explanation: that the *Observer* happened that Sunday to be starting its splendid serialisation from *Hospital* by Polly Toynbee and that hospitals happen to provide one of those topics before which normal readership categories simply melt away.

□ George Fernandes, six months ago Mrs Gandhi's prisoner and now the Janata Government's Minister of Industry, was briefly in London this week on his way to Brussels. When I saw him, he was holding virtually a *levée* over his (uneaten) breakfast in the Waldorf Hotel and, since Tariq Ali had been the first to arrive at 6.45 a.m., he was still in remarkably resilient form when

I turned up at five to nine. His room looked directly out over India House and I couldn't resist asking him how he found it going round foreign capitals knowing all the time that a mere six months ago the Indian diplomats stationed in them would have been busily pumping out propaganda about his being 'a common criminal'. He laughed cheerfully enough and said 'I don't know if it embarrasses *them* – it certainly doesn't embarrass *me*'. In fact, except on the subject of Mrs Gandhi, he was astonishingly forgiving all round. No, he hadn't seen Michael Foot but he would very much have liked to have done so had there been time. He was sorry, too, not to be going to next month's Labour Party conference. He had gone to his first one as long ago as 1954 and it had plainly left its mark on him, since he promptly launched into a formidable imitation of a bellowing Arthur Deakin denouncing Nye Bevan. How, in general, was he finding it having to live under the restraints of being a cabinet minister? Again, the smile: 'I wouldn't say the constraints are unreasonable – it's just that they do rather tend to cramp your style.' Not, though, in his case with anything like total success.

□ I'm not sure this week about the ethics of repeating conversations between even parliamentary colleagues, but there's a small vignette in Woodrow Wyatt's new book out next week (*What's Left of the Labour Party?* Sidgwick & Jackson £4.95) that I'm prepared to take the risk for. Woodrow is at Königswinter attending the annual Anglo-German Conference and finds himself at breakfast sitting opposite Douglas Jay who, somewhat bewilderingly, is surrounded by large brown envelopes out of which he proceeds by turns to shake various forms of breakfast cereal. The rest you will have to take from Woodrow:

Seeing my interest, Douglas said: 'Can't trust these foreigners with breakfast. Always take mine with me when I go abroad. They might give you cheese or something like that.'

Crucifer

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

□ Patients and staff at Manor Hospital for the Mentally Handicapped, Epsom, are being questioned about allegations that target practice with an air gun was carried on in one of the wards. The allegations, made by some patients at the 970-bed hospital are thought to include William Tell-style exploits, in which plastic beakers were shot off patients' heads. – *Guardian* (Russell Holmes)

□ Despite a £25 first prize for a 1,000 word essay competition on 'Why young people are so apathetic,' no entries have been received. – *Telegraph and Argus* (Ann McGivering)

□ Under this by-law the removal of anything from the beach is forbidden. 'The inspector was quite within his rights to stop this lady taking the pebbles away,' said Mr Roberts. 'We have every sympathy with her but I am afraid the law is the law and she was breaking it. The amount of pebbles taken is immaterial.' – *Daily Express* (Ron Greenhalgh)

Anne Bennett

A Suitable Tenant

Housing didn't like Eileen's father who kept 13 cats. So when the old man died recently they threatened not to give her the tenancy on the grounds that she was unhygienic. Oh God, I thought, give me the private landlord any day; as long as he gets his rent you can be as filthy as you like. Anyway I rallied to Eileen's defence and battle commenced. Eventually they brought in the Medical Officer of Health as arbitrator, which explains why I was on my way to meet this woman doctor, Dr Lane MB ChB MFCM DPH, one sunny morning. The crescent was a cul-de-sac of houses the council had tacked on to the outskirts of the village and when I reached it, Dr Lane was already there poking about like an archaeologist in Crete.

'Rather pleasant cottages,' she observed, thus betraying her middle-class origin since to those of us with no pretensions cottages are places with thatched roofs, otherwise they're houses. 'But all those cars in the garden she went on,' shaking her head disapprovingly. 'Bangers,' I said, but she still looked puzzled. 'Stock cars. Anyway they're not Eileen's - they belong next door.'

'Ooh,' she said.

We waited after I'd banged on the door. Silence. The crescent slumbered on. A few mongrels emerged, congregated and straggled down the road putting up their legs as they went. Eileen's house still presented a closed-up appearance: all doors and windows shut and curtains pulled, though two or three cats sat on the window sill gazing out at us and yawning, survivors of the original 13.

'She's having her bath,' hazarded Dr Lane - a remark which should rank with 'Anyone for tennis?' 'Could be,' I said, not wishing to appear negative.

Eventually 'I'm coming' Eileen's voice

shouted down, and the Dr looked at her watch - 10.30. First black mark against her, I thought.

The back door finally opened to reveal a tousled Eileen. She was in her early 40s yet curiously dated: the daughter who had stayed at home while her sister went off and got married, the one who had cared for her grandmother, mother and father. Now they were all dead and she was stranded alone.

'I'd like a bit of life,' she had confided in me wistfully once. 'Like my sister, she's had it good.'

'You're better looking than your sister,' I told her. If I could have found her a lover, I would have done; it would have put a sparkle in her eye.

We trailed in. 'Didn't expect you today,' said Eileen laconically.

'Have a cigarette,' she said to the doctor. 'Thank you, no.'

'Be lost without my cigarettes,' said Eileen.

The doctor was eyeing the kitchen. It didn't look too bad really, though a divan bed does take up a lot of the space.

'You sleep down here?' queried the doctor.

'Why not?' said Eileen abrasively. 'There's only me so why go upstairs?'

'Let's go in the other room,' I said.

I felt I should give a reason for the doctor's presence. 'Dr Lane is reporting to the Housing Committee on applications for tenancies,' I said.

'Have you considered a residential job?' said the doctor.

You're not foisting that on her, I thought. Lose her job, and she'd join the ranks of the single homeless. I'd primed Eileen well on that one.

'No, I want my tenancy,' said she. I beamed on her.

'Do you feel isolated here at all?' queried the doctor, obviously feeling she should probe a little. 'Do you have much contact with neighbours?'

'No,' said Eileen matter of factly. 'They're always out.'

'They never ask you to join them?'

'Wouldn't go,' said Eileen. 'Stockcar racing, that's all they're interested in. Too noisy for me.' 'Aah the cars,' said the doctor, contriving to sound both sympathetic and knowing.

She probed on. 'You have an aunt living nearby?'

'Never see her,' said Eileen 'She never visits?' said the doctor.

'She's 86' I said, though not to much avail.

'You could visit her' said the doctor reproachfully.

'I want to be with people of my own age,' cried Eileen. 'Old people, I've spent my life with them.'

'Yes, yes,' said the doctor soothingly. She seemed uncertain of her role. 'I think I'll just go upstairs,' she said vaguely. 'Nothing there,' said Eileen.

'If I just take a look.'

'Why does she want to go up there?' hissed Eileen to me, once she was out of the room. 'She has to report on the house,' I said.

She seemed a long time up there. I thought I'd better go up as well in case she had discovered some dreadful hidden squalor.

'Look at the floor,' she said.

I looked. On the bare boards were a few stains. 'Excreta,' she said.

'Could be the cats.'

'Human,' she said.

'Well, it must have been her father,' I said, 'because she never comes up.' We went down.

'Yes, well, that seems to have covered everything,' said the doctor hesitantly, 'it's nice to have met you, Eileen. Perhaps we'll meet again.'

'Doubt it,' said Eileen.

I went out with the doctor to her car. She looked pensive. 'I really don't know' she said. 'She smokes an awful lot and I gather she takes sleeping pills. Of course she is rather isolated out here, you don't think she'd be better off in a . . .'

'No I don't,' I spat out, 'and anyway it's her choice. She's vulnerable because she's not very bright, she's poor, working-class - if she was middle-class and had money she wouldn't be in this position. And,' I added meaningfully, 'it will look bad for housing if any of all this gets in to the papers.'

'I'll send you a copy of my report' the doctor said hurriedly breaking off the engagement and was gone.

I went back into the house, my crusading spirit for the poor and the dispossessed coursing righteously through my veins. 'Over my dead body, Eileen,' I said 'will they tip you out of this house.' 'I been thinking,' she said, 'I wouldn't mind giving it a try, a hostel or something.'

I looked at her. I could have kicked her out of the bloody house myself. 'You wouldn't like it,' I said. 'You'd hate it, Eileen, I know you would.' 'Suppose you're right,' she muttered.

'Fascist,' said Rosie back at the office.



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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Travel Broadens the Mind

It is my custom, while pulling up the occasional weeds that are rash enough to invade the neat, multi-flowered beds of 'Myrtlebank' (we have to be ever at the ready and looking our best as I never know when our local and flourishing Conservative Association may require my garden and orchard for a coffee morning or a treasure hunt or a fête, the last-named especially welcome as being such a source of home-made marmalade), to direct my mind to other and more pleasurable matters. Though the gastronomically adventuresome pop assorted ones into salads, there is in my view little to notch up on the plus side for weeds, and even while identifying and heaving them up, I prefer to ignore them. So, if I happen to be hungry, I think greedily of steak and kidney puddings (the luscious suet making them greatly preferable to pies), apple charlotte with cream (our very own pippins put to good use), and then Stilton, which turns out to be a small, Huntingdonshire village through which I used sometimes, in my schoolmastering days in adjacent Northamptonshire, to pass by car, not a cheese in sight (I did the same thing once in Italy with a village called Gorgonzola. Ditto).

If literature chances to loom mentally up, I think with pleasure of two highly cherished women novelists, both nowadays largely forgotten. Each of them provided, and it is a talent that does not always get the credit it should, such thumpingly good stories. They are Elizabeth Russell, who always signed her books 'by the authoress of *Elizabeth and her German Garden*' and who, even pre-first world war, made hilarious fun of the race that people then thought of as 'horrible Huns', with recent history to prove how right they were. She wrote one of the dozen or so books that I happily read once every year, *The Enchanted April*. The other novelist is Stella Gibbons, whose rightly stunning success with *Cold Comfort Farm* has tended to push into the background her many subsequent triumphs, among them *Bassett*, *Miss Linsey and Pa* and *Nightingale Wood*. Besiege your libraries. Write to publishers. Scour second-hand bookshops. True enjoyment awaits.

As regular readers will know only too well, I ponder a great deal on the theatre and the entertainment world in general, which can sometimes provide extra entertainment unintended by its sponsors. There was hidden humour freely available for the irreverent in *The Sound of Music* - all those noisy nuns bellowing their hearts out ('Climb every mountain, ford every stream'; really, the sheer exhaustion of it all) and memorable lines such as 'Sister Martha, pray conduct the new postulant to the robing room'. Then there was the new and musical version of *Lost Horizon*, with our revered, berobed and improbably Tibetan Sir John (was it

my imagination or was property snow coming out of his mouth rather than into it?) welcoming the new arrivals to Shangri-La with a courteous 'let me lead you to the nearest lamasery'. In more reputable areas of the land of paint and powder, a recent and agreeable life of Max Miller reminds me not so much of the Cheeky Chappie himself as of somebody who was his superior in so many ways, Sid Field, with his constant refusal ever to have any dealings whatsoever with a joke that was even remotely blue. ('Oh I couldn't say that. It's rude.')

Which reminds me, whatever became of the British Rail Politeness Campaign? I seem to remember it getting newspaper publicity some weeks ago, with happy snaps at a suburban station of a smiling employee joyously welcoming commuters aboard the cheery 7.40. I pictured the contagion spreading along the tracks, faster even than the High Speed to Bristol, from station to station, with everywhere a new, springy alertness and confidence such as Montgomery provided for the troops. Anyhow, excited beyond measure by the possibilities and anxious to view for myself the new upsurge in manners, I approached Paddington on the 2.15 p.m. (Fridays only) from Exeter and alighting lithely at platform 3, looked keenly round. Nothing. Not even,

Roger Woddis

The Caine Mutiny

Michael Caine says he is leaving his 'beloved England' to escape high taxes, trade unions and Socialism.

O to flee from England
Now that Labour's there,
For whoever works in England
Wants to grab the lion's share,
And the exile cannot conceal his grief
As he grope for another handkerchief,
While he's down to seven hundred thou.
In England - now!

And he contemplates with melancholy
The land he loves, and all the lolly!
Look at those hands, those angry scars,
The weary eyes behind the glasses,
And spare a thought for the superstars.
That's Michael Caine; he blames the
working classes,
Lest you should think their lot is any duller
Than life in Technicolor!
And though the carpet's deep in
dollar-bills,
The refugees still weep in Beverly Hills.
FADEOUT on Britain and the tax-collector:
CLOSEUP of one heroic tax-defector.

as in wartime, 'The Warsaw Concerto' to greet us from the public address system. The few railway officials that were visible (they seem to be becoming as rare as porters) bore the customary, modish, modern air of officials almost everywhere - total and annihilating boredom, coupled with a glazed look as though for the last five hours somebody had been hitting them on the head with a croquet mallet. No welcome. Not a smile. No 'can I help you?' What went wrong?

I had recently had, anyway, a sobering railway experience, in no way the fault of BR. A letter in the *Daily Telegraph* told, a few days ago, of an alarming and quite pointless organised attack (there is no other word for it) on a Southern line train by a gang of juveniles, but mine was in no physical way alarming, merely revolting. I was in an Exeter-bound train and in one of those, to me, unattractively open carriages. As we were nearing Reading, I became aware of two ill-behaved youths, aged 12 at the most, who, tired of their tomato sandwiches, were throwing them at people. Near them was seated an innocent, golden-haired girl, aged about ten, alone and deep in a book and looking like a charming illustration from some Victorian schoolroom book for Sunday reading and with a strong religious message. Such a girl was often called Dulcie and died prematurely, cascading prayers and forgiveness and love, from tuberculosis. When the sandwich ammunition had run out one of the boys approached Dulcie and muttered and nudged and irritated her into speech. What, I wondered, would the rose bud lips find to say. 'Bugger off,' said Dulcie.

The gift of a Mars Bar soon changed all that, for even saintly Victorian children have their price, and after further consultation the happy couple, whispering and sniggering, left the carriage and, stationing themselves in the doorway by the exit to the platform, proceeded to expose themselves to each other, Dulcie providing admiring squeaks. Ten minutes later, they resumed their seats. Feeling (once a schoolmaster, always, I am afraid, a schoolmaster) that somebody ought to be 'told', I informed the ticket-collector when he came through the carriage. He was polite but distant, evidently with problems of his own ('Well, that's the modern child for you!'). At Taunton, Dulcie got out and was warmly welcomed by what appeared to be a respectable, middle-aged aunt with cries of 'Well, darling, had a good journey?'

I was unable to hear Dulcie's answer. Should I, I wondered, have got out too and, drawing her to one side, sneaked to the aunt, not in any busybody spirit but simply to try to prevent Dulcie becoming a proud mother at the age of 12, a happening which seemed only too probable? What, if anything, was to be done? The power of the individual in this world of unions and gangs and confederations and groups diminishes daily, and as though by intent. There are many well-intentioned people still about but with no means of setting things right, and, to cries of 'Blimp!' and 'Get lost!', I say firmly that a lot of wrong and indeed evil things are happening to our poor country and I am not, in this case, referring to nasty-minded little children in railway carriages.

Letters to the Editor

Education and Equality

Sir, Peter Wilby is one of the most penetrating critics of the current educational scene and his analysis of our failure to achieve equality through educational change is masterly. There is however an essential piece missing from his article (NS 16 September). He does not tell us what it is that we omitted to change in our education *because* we were wasting time and money pursuing the mirage of equality through social engineering. Without this information his article is incomplete.

The heyday of that particular form of self-delusion that sought to achieve social justice through educational reform was the 15 years 1960-1975. They were also the years when it gradually dawned on the British that without an Empire they would have to earn a living just like everyone else. That dawning of economic reality should have persuaded us to look critically at an education system that was still heavily biased towards individual choice as against national requirements, and towards academic purity as against technical application. But we didn't. We were all too busy trying to usher in (or keep at bay) a fair and just society by secondary re-organisation, broadening the curriculum, destreaming and other well-intentioned reforms. The result is that we have lost out in two ways. We have failed to achieve equality through educational reform and we have failed to modernise the curriculum so that it bears some relation to the country's need to earn a living. Of the two failures, the latter is the more serious.

Sir Alex Smith, the chairman of the Schools' Council, has argued that our failure over the last 15 years to structure education so that it is geared to the country's need to earn a living may have been critical; but that North Sea Oil could provide a second chance to put things right. Peter Wilby touched on (but did not develop) one aspect of 'putting things right'. We can no longer afford to develop the sort of academic high-fliers who from the age of 16 or even earlier, have studied no science and mathematics and whose understanding of the practical application of these subjects is virtually nil.

Early specialisation not only effectively prevents a large number of the more able pupils from even considering a career in applied science and technology. It encourages throughout the education system an exaggerated respect for what is academic and theoretical as distinct from what is practical and applied. We may not agree with Turgenev's Bazarov that 'one chemist is worth 20 poets', but we could try to communicate through the ethos of our schools that one good engineer will probably do more for the improvement of society than 20 Hampstead intellectuals pursuing theoretical utopias.

The specialist sixth form is only one way in which education fails to reflect the nation's need to earn a living. Earning a living requires hard work. I seem to remember one of the sillier gurus of the Sixties claiming that the puritan ethic of hard work was an anachronism. Ten years and several IMF loans later, that claim looks not only silly but sick. Its influence lingers nevertheless. For far too many children the message of school is that hard work is either unnecessary or anti-social.

The modernisation of British education thus requires measures that are more down to earth than those Peter Wilby proposes. He is right to say 'We must accept that education is an ineffective form of social engineering'. But having accepted that, we must set about making

good the lost 15 years by shifting the whole emphasis in our education system so that it reflects a more realistic balance between individual choice and national requirements, academic purity and practical application, and between education for leisure and sheer hard work. There might then be a chance that the nation would earn a good enough living to ensure that inequality did not automatically mean poor housing, long waits to see the doctor, large classes and restricted cultural horizons.

JOHN RAE
Head Master

Westminster School
London SW1

Johnson's Farewell

Sir, It is an undertaking of some degree of delicacy to examine into the causes of public disorders; it seems to be bourgeois heresy to examine into the disorder of the Labour Party, if one is, or has been, a supporter of it.

If the letters published in the NS of 16 September are representative of Labour supporters' reaction to Paul Johnson's article, then he must remain convinced in the truth of his lament. Not one correspondent really grasps the nettle, or finds - as James Fenton shamefacedly does - even 'much detail . . . with which it is difficult to disagree'. They appear obsessed with Johnson's peevishness in quitting Labour, or with real or imagined affronts to themselves. The reactions of the prospective candidates is rather predictable; I mean, it is wicked to attack an incumbent Labour PM especially if you want to be a Labour MP. Mr Frischauer is an exception, presumably for his own purposes as self-appointed arbiter of the meaning of language. If he was tempted, why can't he comment on Johnson's philosophy? I'd much rather hear from him on that, and from Mr Wright, on 'the real debate within democratic socialism'. I found Johnson's article stimulating - though it will not convert me from my allegiance - and of a much better standard than some of the ill-written drivel you have treated your readers to recently.

The article must have been penned before Callaghan's son-in-law revealed his (the PM's) preposterous vision of himself as Moses, though had he known of it, Paul Johnson might still have quoted the same comment from Bacon. I prefer a description of James the Old Pretender by one of his supporters. It is fairer, since James Francis Edward was a man of considerable courage, and I don't need Willi Frischauer to tell me courage and cunning are not the same thing:

We saw nothing in him which looked like spirit; he never appear'd with cheerfulness and vigour to animate us . . .

JOHN W. ELLIS

42 Nethercote Road
Tackley, Oxford

Sir, The outcry over Paul Johnson is instructive. Let us suppose it was the Communist Party he was leaving (*à la* Douglas Hyde). Then the pundits would rush to say it was all the Party's fault. Paul Johnson would be the hero for at last examining his faith, albeit 'late in his political life'. And Lady Gaitskell wouldn't call his heart-searchings 'turgid'.

Most of the names adduced reinforce Paul Johnson's own contention (which is as new as Marx) that 'socialism' can mean anything or nothing. Leaders may proclaim (even believe) that their 'socialism' is about 'equality' and so on - but the actions of the Wilsons and

the Callaghans demonstrate that British 'socialism' is about getting office and holding office.

HOWARD CORBISHLEY

30 Radstock Avenue
Kenton
Harrow, Middx

Sir, The death of Paul Johnson's socialism, never a strong being, has been known to the general public for some time. Its repeated exhumation in your columns suggests a degree of necrophilia in an editor which some might think undesirable.

Many of us have concerns about the state of health of the Labour Party; my principal one being that the debate about its future and purpose should be conducted in an unconstructive and histrionic manner. It may be an unpleasant sentiment to voice, but I do feel that Mr Johnson's departure has added more to the future of democratic socialism than his writing of the past few years.

DAVID MILES
Deputy Leader
Labour Group

Westminster City Hall
London SW1

Sir, We have had criticism of Paul Johnson's character, his temperament, his age, his education, his class and his use of the word 'Fascism'. Could we please have a reasoned, straight forward criticism of the points he is making about trade unions and the Labour Party? To treat him in a 'silly old Pooh' manner is insulting and does nothing to clarify the ideas of those who do not agree with him.

WINIFRED CRUTCHFIELD

Kent Cottage
Cophorne
Crawley, Sussex

Reselection of MPs

Sir, You refer (NS 16 September) to '90 resolutions tabled by constituency parties' on reselection of candidates. Can't you count? In fact, there are 72, including one tabled by 67 parties. Of the constituency parties concerned only 30 represent parties which actually have succeeded in getting a Labour MP elected. This represents less than one in ten of Labour seats.

When you suggest that 'almost the only people who are passionately against it are the MPs', you are writing nonsense. A very large number of people in the Labour Party see it as merely an attempt by the Left to convert the party into a series of small 'Left' caucuses to exercise control over Labour MPs with sanction 'if you don't do what we tell you, we'll choose somebody else next time'. And when you defend the proposal on the grounds that it will make it easier to get rid of MPs who are considered to be too old, you overlook the fact that the electorate now includes several million old age pensioners. Why should they not be represented in Parliament by some of their own number? In failing to observe this obvious consideration, you hardly show the 'mental flexibility' which you accuse the old of lacking.

J. STEWART COOK

37 Frances Road
Windsor
Berks.

Sir, In your otherwise very persuasive leader 'An End to Audacity' you assert (without offering any arguments) that a constituency party should not dismiss its MP because it disapproves of his private life. Why not?

An MP's views on private morality are not less but much more important than his views on education, monetarism, or Ulster - it, is

only when legislation affecting private morality is before Parliament that MPs as individuals are allowed to count for much.

If a feminist knows that her MP beats his wife she has every right to campaign against his re-adoption – not to punish him but because, behaving like a chauvinist pig at home, he is likely to behave like one in the division lobbies and in committee.

I happen to believe that marital fidelity is a good thing and that it is wrong to offer bribes to policemen. If I had been in the late Tom Driberg's constituency party, would not I have been entitled to try to get him replaced by someone more in sympathy with these beliefs?

D. WATKINS

Gaycroft
Laleston
Bridgend, Glam.

Sir, I was delighted to read your leader on the reselection of Labour MPs, and especially interested in its last paragraph. It has struck me as obvious, since the last party conference that the principle, struggled for by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), of automatic reselection, had been as good as achieved and that the time had come for attention to be turned to the credibility of the General Management Committee (GMC) within each Constituency Labour Party (CLP).

As you point out, the structure of the GMC is antiquated and illogical. Women's Section delegates are a historical accident, being carried over from the time when the party did not accept individual members. Trades union branch affiliation, however appropriate in areas dominated by one or two major industries (e.g. mining or agricultural districts), make no sense whatsoever at least in London, where branch boundaries do not and cannot in any way approximate to constituency boundaries, with the consequence that affiliation is bound to be capricious, and delegates largely unaccountable in practice. The socialist societies are a standing invitation to abuse. I reckon that a Labour Party member who is under 25, female, a member of an affiliated union and a Fabian could, if she so chose, vote five times in the round of annual elections for GMC delegates.

These considerations weighed in my own branch when it proposed a conference resolution that there should be automatic reselection of candidates and MPs by a meeting of all party members. I was hardly surprised when the Hornsey GMC rejected it in favour of the CLPD's draft resolution, as the Hornsey constituency party contains two national officers of CLPD. Some instructive arguments were, however, aired. It was suggested that those who were not sufficiently active to become GMC delegates did not deserve to vote at a selection conference – this in a constituency party which has for many years enjoyed contested elections to its GMC in all its wards. It was suggested that rank-and-file members would fall under the malign influence of the capitalist media. It was suggested that TU affiliated members would be disfranchised. It was finally suggested that the CLP could not afford to hire a hall for such a meeting!

It seems to me that none of these arguments merits a reply: the state of mind they reflect is all too clear. The CLPD is apparently committed to the sovereignty of the General Management Committee: no end of audacity here, is it too much to ask them – what about the sovereignty of the party membership at large? Will the real campaign for democracy in the Labour Party please stand up?

MIKE KILLINGWORTH

39 Weston Park
London N8

Quis Custodiet?

Sir, My experience leads me to believe that a large-scale deception is being perpetrated by the self-styled 'Advertising Standards Authority', which has successfully presented itself to the public as an independent watchdog on British advertising.

Taken in by this pose, I sent the ASA a popular and pernicious advertisement which traded on our national hypochondriacal fear of constipation. I pointed out that it relied on a medical falsehood, and was likely to do considerable harm to healthy people by persuading them that they were ill and needed medication. After a lengthy delay the ASA sent me an excerpt from its deliberations to show that my complaint had been dealt with. To my amazement, they had simply referred it to the (very wealthy) manufacturers of the advertised product who 'assured' them that the advertisement was truthful. On this earth-shaking evidence the matter was dismissed.

In subsequent inquiries of several sources, I have been told that the 'Authority' is a body set up by advertisers and financially maintained by the very industries whose advertisements they scrutinise. It can thus hardly afford to be independent. We will surely all welcome any voluntary restraint on misleading advertising, however feeble. Attempting to increase the public credulity about 'honest', 'truthful' advertising, based on a deceptive pose of independence, is a very different matter. Perhaps other readers can suggest appropriate counter-moves?

A. C. CARR
Senior Registrar

Maudsley Hospital
Denmark Hill
London SE5

The Front in Lewisham

Sir, N. W. H. Simon (Letters 16 September) was right to point out that the racist vote in Lewisham East in the May GLC election was 1,900 or 6 percent. The fact remains that we lost Lewisham East by 1,100 votes – and many of us locally think it was because of the National Front and National Party intervention.

RON PEPPER
Chairman, East Lewisham CLP
13 South Vale Road
London SE3

The Forbidden Subject

Sir, Syntactically speaking Maurice Yaffé's article on paedophilia (NS 16 September) is pretty sloppy stuff, and the resulting smear of many dedicated and innocent people is quite reprehensible.

He writes: 'There might be more, in fact, whose sexual preference is for girls.' *More of whom?* We look for a clue at the beginning of the sentence where the subject is 'most

An Apology

In a footnote to a letter from David Basnett and Geoffrey Goodman appearing in our issue of 15 July Paul Johnson referred to 'the persistent and tendentious leaking' of the contents of the recent Report of the Royal Commission of the Press, and then added the phrase 'Now who, I wonder was responsible for that?'

It has been suggested to us that, in their context, those words could have been taken to imply that Mr Basnett and Mr Goodman, both members of the Royal Commission, bore some responsibility for the premature disclosure of the Report's contents. If such misunderstanding has arisen we naturally regret it, and we are happy to acknowledge that any interpretation of Mr Johnson's words to that effect would be completely without foundation.

members of PIE' – but there we are told that they 'appear to be attracted to young boys', so the 'more' is left hanging and can refer only to something unspecified in the mind of the author.

But worse: after learning that 'the evidence of this sexual orientation . . . is difficult to assess' we are assured that a 'high proportion' (of whom? still undefined) 'will have sought out positions as scoutmasters, youth leaders, teachers and clergy.' If this should be allowed to pass as statement of fact, we may conclude that woolly thinkers have sought out positions as senior clinical psychologists.

IAN FLINTOFF

13 Cornwall Crescent
London W11

Words and Meanings

Sir, In correcting Paul Addison's use of the term 'militant suffragettes', Trevor Lloyd (Letters 2 September) himself slipped up, otherwise I would not have raised so trivial a point.

Contrary to his assertion, all the women who resorted to civil disobedience called themselves 'suffragettes', also 'suffragists', 'militants' and even on occasion they lapsed into tautology – like many historians since – by referring to themselves as 'militant suffragettes'.

The term 'suffragette' was first used by a *Daily Mail* reporter in December 1905 to mock the youthfulness and, what he considered to be, the juvenile tactics of the new breed of suffragist. Christabel Pankhurst jumped at the name. 'Suffragist', she declared, implies 'merely want the vote', whereas 'suffragette' with the hardening of the G strikes a more positive note and implies 'mean to get it'. It was then commonly used by all sections of the movement and by opponents to distinguish the militants from the constitutionalists.

JILL CRAIGIE

66 Pilgrim's Lane
London NW3

Dirty Stories

Sir, Your critic, Clive James, mars an otherwise excellent review (NS 16 September) of Richard Ingram's new book with an entirely gratuitous side-swipe at me. His allegation is that Ingram allows me to fulfil his life's ambition, which is to tell dirty stories about people he envies and send their children crying home from school. This is, of course, not only ludicrous but unsupportable in fact, and I challenge James to produce even one instance of such a situation having ever occurred.

Readers of the NEW STATESMAN may wish to know the origin of this curious, one-sided vendetta. Some years ago an item, not written by me, appeared in *Private Eye* revealing that Mr James's amorous advances had been rejected by a titled lady, no doubt one of the people I 'envy' and whose children I send 'crying home from school'.

NIGEL DEMPSTER

Daily Mail
Northcliffe House
London, EC4

Sir, Perhaps Russell Davies (NS 9 September) would accept the possibility of another revision of what the Duchess is supposed to have said. The full quote is: 'The Duke is a long time coming', said the Duchess, stirring her tea with the other hand.' It may be no more than the prejudice of long habit, but it does seem to me more corrective than Mr Davies's choice.

HAROLD J. READ

75 Allenby Road
Southall
Middlesex

France 1848-1945

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Jon Stallworthy

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Oxford University Press

AUTUMN BOOKS

V. S. Pritchett

In the Echo Chamber

Blindness by HENRY GREEN Hogarth Press
£3.95

Looking back on the novels of the late Twenties, a period when style and originality counted above all, I still think Henry Green showed a startling certainty of direction in his first novel. *Blindness* was written when he was about 18; superficially autobiographical, it was only very slightly derivative. The remarkable quality was the young author's accomplished sense of his 'line': he would sacrifice everything to seeing and hearing, not as a reporter, but as an artist abandoning himself to the consciousness of others. Random calamity was to have a marked place in Henry Green's mature work and often echoes the accidental skids in our garrulous minds; but when, in this first book, the youthful writer is accidentally blinded for life, Green was not so much interested in blindness as a case for pity or stoicism but as a device for intensifying his sensibility and retrieving exact memory as a writer. *Blindness* was to be a journey into a country otherwise lost. The subject of all Henry Green's later novels is the inner landscape in which his characters lead their real lives. Under the spoken rigmarole they conceal their resourcefulness as human beings.

When he came to write *Living, Caught and Loving*, his characters were for the most part ordinary workers on the factory floor, firemen, stunned soldiers, dull people in offices, servants, and occasionally frantic upper-class people. The striking thing is that this distinctly upper-class artist is pretty well the first English novelist to have listened to working-class speech and to have understood its overtones and undertones, without being what, in the Thirties, one would have called politically committed. The committed did nothing like as well. He could, of course, have been playing a brilliant game; but he was not. The morbid, the comic, the lyrical and even the mannered aspects of his talent were not affected: fierce, fantastic and eccentric as it could be, his material came from outside and mingled with his nature. He was not in the least sentimental: his eye was hard, his ear sharp. Some very fine artists impose themselves, but Henry Green belonged to those who masochistically seek to let their characters speak through them. In so speaking, they may expose more than they know; but don't we all stubbornly feel that, for better or worse, we are more than we know? There is a muddled justification for our existence. We are encrusted in something like a private culture.

In *Blindness*, we are first shown the boy before his accident. Precocious, scornfully determined to be a great writer, and with a sharp, quick, educated mind, he is quite

certain to be talented. He is also rich. His short diary about friends and quarrels at a great Public School is packed with swank and tetchiness. Then the accident occurs. He is reduced at once to helplessness in the family's grand country house, to be petted and pitied by the servants and to arouse guilt in his step-mother, a hard-riding, capable ruler of the estate and the village; she is struggling between her sense of emotional inadequacy and her natural, ruthless worldliness. The boy's blindness - as he coldly notes - has provided the household with an emotional orgy, enlarging dramas of pity and bustling self-importance. In the step-mother's chattering mind we see the beginnings of Henry Green's gift for drawing on the inexhaustible wells of human egoism.

She leaves her dining-room for the sitting-room which looks out on to a rose garden:

It ought to look well this year, not that he would see it, though. She had lots of things to do this morning, she would not let the thing come up and crush her. His was the sort of nature which needed to be left alone, so it was no use going to see him. Plans must be made for when his new life would begin, and some idea might emerge out of her work. Being blind he could do work for the other blind and so not feel solitary, but get the feeling of a Regiment. Meanwhile there was the Nursing Association. She must write to his friends, too, they ought to know that he was blind. Would they really care? But, of course, anyone who knew John must care. Then their letters would come in return, shy and halting, with a whole flood of consolation from the neighbours, half of whom did not care in the least. She would have to answer them; but no, she couldn't. Then they would say that the blow had aged her, she had said that so often herself. Their letters would be full of their own little griefs, a child who had a cold, a husband worried by his Indian liver, one who had been cut publicly by Mrs So-and-So - but this wasn't fair. They would write rather of someone of theirs who had died recently or years and years ago. And she would answer

suitably, for of course by now one knew what to say, but it was hateful people laying little private bits of themselves bare and she being expected to do likewise. Still, it would be all over some day.

She took up the Nursing Accounts.

A whole fox-hunting society at a time when the big houses are beginning to go comes to life, and is at a loss to know how to feel. For the boy, the new life means a proud angry battle with self-pity, an intensifying of the will to remember every detail of the country; exactly what the fields looked like, how the fish rose in the stream, where the grass and the nettles met, understanding sounds, listening to the inflexions of voices, wincing at too much oozing sentiment, discriminating between the notes of truth and untruth. The incipient ruthlessness of the artist is strengthened. There follows a halting friendship with the ragged daughter of the local, unfrocked, gin-soaking clergyman, a girl humiliated by her father's dilapidation. This episode is a shade too bizarre in a Powys-y rural manner; but the halting talk between the shy, rather cruel boy and the straightforward, kind girl is excellent and shows us the start of Green's remarkable talent for drawing simple young women. His gift lies in conveying the strangeness of the unspoken that underlies the spoken and for real dialogue which is a juxtaposition of voices that do not answer each other, but continue lives that will come nearer and will, in the end, be separate. Being young is a quest.

In the last stage of the boy's friendship with the girl, one sees Green's own mind made up as a writer. Country life is sinister, childish, futile. Towns and cities where real people work at their machines are to be his world, among people who have reserves of direction and skill, where humanity exists and love is grown-up. At the end of the book the out-of-date country house is sold. The boy and his mother go to London and there is new incitement to make what he can of life.

Like most first novels of talent, *Blindness* is a book of brilliant pages rather than a sound whole. The leap forward to the factory life of his next book, *Living*, is enormous. The study of blindness seems to express a strain of morbidity which was valuable to Green because it was not sentimental; it was, rather, a way of unselfing himself in order to enter the maze in which the minds and feelings and interests of ordinary people, totally foreign to himself, were going round and round in circles. He was not taking them up as a cause; he loved their mystery. He was a far closer and more feeling observer here than George Orwell was, for he had no polemic. Henry Green loved the obstinacy, the strangeness, the

Among this week's contributors:

V. S. PRITCHETT's most recent book was *The Gentle Barbarian: The Life and Work of Turgenev*.

WILLIAM SHAWCROSS is currently working on a study of Kissinger and Cambodia. He has recently been appointed Visiting Research Fellow at Merton College, Oxford.

BETTY FRIEDAN is the author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and *It Changed My Life* (1977).

RUSSELL DAVIES is film critic of the *Observer*; he also plays piano with The Savoy Jazzmen.

LOUIS FINGER is a well-known personality based in London's West End.

monotone of the deeply emotional culture which ran alongside his own cool one. Human repetitiousness was a sort of poetry for him. It also defined the inner territory of obscure rights, wrongs and blind stubbornness to which our devious self-interest or our waywardness clings like creeper. His people are new on top but old underneath.

In spite of the mannerisms and a wild delight in calamity, Green seems to me to have been the most luminous novelist of the Thirties and Forties – as *Blindness* foretold – and truly seminal. For him people were echoing chambers. One had to pick out this voice or that before it was lost in the general reverberation.

John Bayley

Vanity Fare

Thackeray: Prodigal Genius by JOHN CAREY
Faber £6.95

Was Thackeray a genius? He was certainly prodigal, spending a substantial fortune by the time he was 23 and dying at 52, worn out with eating and drinking and writing. He was a keen student of Balzac, but though he had the same large appetite for life he lacked entirely that rapacious interest in the politics and mechanics of a changing society. Most novelists are perhaps less concerned about society and what is happening in their time than they would like us to think, but Thackeray, one feels, genuinely didn't give a damn. His reputation, which remained high for half a century, has since been steadily in decline, though George Orwell, oddly enough, had a soft spot for him, because of his 'honesty', and his fondness for food and clothes and customs and class.

John Carey has written one of the best recent books on Dickens, *The Violent Effigy*, and this admirable study of Thackeray follows the same prescription of coming at the reality of the work through the significance of its detail. As done by Carey this is a more revolutionary technique than it sounds, as well as being far more enjoyable for the reader than the standard moralistic or structural sorts of approach. Like all good criticism it makes us think hard about what is actually going on in the novels, and the commentary – though based on large resources of invisible scholarship – appears to merge into the text of the works themselves, for Carey writes with a fine hard fluency and wit and a Victorian relish for what he describes. If only Barthes wrote a little bit more like Balzac.

'Nothing meant more to Thackeray than food, except perhaps drink,' begins one chapter. Thackeray associated his lost wife with bouillabaisse, which they used to consume together, and 'his love for Jane Brookfield was mixed up with jam tarts'. Comestibles and commodities of all kinds take on their own life in Thackeray from the simple gluttony he has for them: they do not become, as in Dickens, aspects of a deeper and divided imagination. Thackeray was an uncomplicated man; however lyrical his responses, one doubts whether he had any imagination at all; certainly he never 'makes things strange' for the reader in the formalist sense. His rooms and objects are never 'defamiliarised' but acquire, as the novel goes on, an excessive even dreadful

kind of familiarity, as such things may do in life. His characters, too, become familiar in the same discouraging but accurate way. They are never seen from an unexpected angle; the light never falls on them with a difference. Hardy suddenly makes Tess seem a totally different person by bringing her downstairs yawning – 'the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's': that would never happen in Thackeray. Major Pendennis gets on with being Major Pendennis, Becky with her scheming: even when she savages her little boy we hardly raise an eyebrow. We begin to feel, without any apparent help from our author, just how predictable human beings are and what a dull place Vanity Fair can be.

Appetite sinking into boredom, voracious wonder and delight into disillusionment – that is Thackeray's speciality. At his best he makes it seem an inevitable process (which it isn't) but at the worst – even in *Vanity Fair* – it becomes a sententious formula. Commodities always assert their own powers, however, alternately vivifying and depressing the mood of the writing, in the same way that pleasure in food stands for sex, and satiety for sexual indifference. 'What Becky's admirers regard as their intimate advances', remarks Carey, 'are seen as commercial operations, following lines as well-trodden as a department store.'

'Those shops where the beautiful dressing-gowns hang out, more splendid and gorgeous than any tulips' give place to

something awful in the bedroom of a respectable old couple of 65. Think of the old feathers, turbans, bugles, petticoats, pomatum-pots, spencers, white satin shoes, false fronts, the old flaccid boneless stays tied up in faded riband, the dusky fans, the old 40-years-old baby linen . . . all these lie somewhere, damp and squeezed down into glum old presses and wardrobes.

Things like that do depress Thackeray, whereas they make Dickens's writing more ebullient and macabre than ever: it is one difference between literalness and imagination. But – *dusky fans!* – Thackeray certainly knew how to write and to find the telling word, and his small hasty pieces are always better done than the big lifeless late novels. His mis-spent youth, like Harry Foker's, among 'melting ices and cut pineapples and cigar ashes scattered on fruit', 'collapsed jellies and vapid heeltaps', had left him with a real horror of the malignant treachery of commodities, though commodities were all that life had to offer. His

presentation of loss can be appallingly genuine, more impressive than that of greater writers, and it came straight from his own experience – a lost fortune, a lost wife still living, but mad and unable to recognise husband or children, caring for nothing, as Thackeray wrote to Jane Brookfield, 'but her dinner and glass of porter'. What survived was the worst of all. There was ghastly old Mrs Buller at Richmond, who had always been so fond of him.

O Thackeray she said, what a hardship it is to live to be old. I have one hope left and that is – *blue pill and cod-liver oil*. It was tremendous, the satire.

And – as he might have added, for to add comment to a stark effect seemed to have cheered him up though it irritates us – *we are all the same*. (I recall from one of his letters to Aldous Huxley that D. H. Lawrence, within days of his death, suddenly acquired a touching faith in the sovereign powers of *Bemax*.)

Wholly materialist, sturdily unable to find relief in religion or art, idealism or progress, Thackeray is in some ways a very modern novelist. There are plenty like him today, however careful they are to omit the surface sentiment. He is in fact the tutelary genius of the contemporary low-pressure commodity novel, with its bright despairing reliance on the right details – ratatouille in the dining-space, Tampax in the drawer, copulation on the Heal's divan. To be fair, though, he has no responsibility for the way such novels clutch at contemporary significances, assiduously arranging to be up to the moment in terms of strikes at the airport and explosions in the shops. About all that sort of thing Thackeray mercifully didn't give a damn: he followed the sound Victorian instinct for setting the scene 30 years back, in his own boyhood. The modern consumer-type novel does not necessarily intend to be depressing but is – showing that art has got things wrong somehow. On a grander scale it can be the same with Thackeray: his art can be more depressing than its sentiments about the depressing nature of life. On the other hand it can also elevate us by the simplest means. Carey compares the partridge dinner in *Memorials of Gormandising* with Virginia Woolf's *Boeuf en Daube*, and points out that for Thackeray eating is a soaring spiritualising experience, whereas the texture of her prose leads us downwards into the psyche, 'groping among the tender nerves and filaments'. And after a masterly analysis of *Vanity Fair* his final comment is how curious that 'a novel so attuned to the selfishness and pain behind every face should transmit such an exuberant sense of life'.

This brings us to the quality often claimed for Thackeray: his honesty. In early stories and sketches his stance – again very like some moderns – was: I strip away shams, I see through and tell all. Carey suggests that after the success of *Vanity Fair* he found it paid to cultivate a deliberate blandness, while remaining his unabashed self on the inside. Certainly he privately despised Esmond, and made snide remarks in his letters about Pendennis and his saintly mother. But in a serious novelist this indicates not so much honesty as artistic bankruptcy. No artist can have it both ways, remaining clear-eyed himself while profess-

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ing to find good everywhere (and sanctity in mothers) and letting us all off lightly (yes, we're all the same, dear reader). In fact self-criticism, in Thackeray as in most people, is usually the finest flower of complacency, and he got along by having plenty of both. It is particularly noticeable, as Carey shrewdly observes, in the brilliant *Irish Sketch-Book*. But the indomitable Becky is Thackeray's one great masterpiece of objectification, when he used his very ordinary sensibility to perceive – far more clearly than any of his fellow-novelists – how extremely tough a Victorian woman had to be in order to survive. Any woman: for Amelia is as tough as Becky by other means. And Thackeray can admire both of them wholeheartedly.

Where great novelists are concerned, honesty is likely to be a red herring – what possible good is the concept in relation to Dickens or Tolstoy or Henry James? The personality of their art is far too complex to give it meaning. That it seems a criterion in Thackeray's case shows, I think, that for all his great gifts he is not in the first division of novelists. Orwell's feeling for him is significant. One wonders whether Thackeray's dazzling sketch in the 1840 *Fraser's Magazine*, 'Going to See a Man Hanged', may not have acted as a model or inspiration for Orwell's equally effective sketch, 'A Hanging'. Thackeray really saw one, Orwell very likely did not, but this does not alter the way both pieces work. The writing in them is both too effective and too conscious of its effectiveness to be 'honest': both affect detachment while in fact nudging us, directing our attention to the telling detail – in Orwell's case the dog who joins the procession to the scaffold, in Thackeray's the condemned man's mouth 'contracted into a sort of pitiful smile' which, as Carey well observes, 'suggests a sort of half-embarrassed resignation, like that of a child agreeing to take part in a game it has grown too old for'. But this sort of 'good writing' is always disingenuous, not that it matters – no one minds it in the case of Kipling, another master of the knowing detail. As Kipling would have done, Thackeray pretended to a total expertise on kinds of carriage, horses, uniforms, liveries, buttons, etc, which he would disarmingly admit in private he did not really possess.

The odd thing is that a certain kind of

good writing always seems concocted, whether it is based on real knowledge or not, and Thackeray's dislike of shams and fine sentiments often gives the unexpected impression of a kind of self-apology. He has none of the confidence of genius. He could be touchy too, as when he hounded the inoffensive journalist Yates from the Garrick Club for writing a fairly mild essay suggesting that he had begun to adapt his art too much to his audience. Dickens came to Yates's defence and he and Thackeray never spoke to each other again: one imagines that Thackeray in any case always felt deeply uneasy in Dickens's company.

William Shawcross

Body Count

A Rumor of War by PHILIP CAPUTO *Macmillan* £5.50

Peace with Horror by JOHN BARRON and ANTHONY PAUL *Hodder and Stoughton* £4.95

In the official Report on the War in Vietnam (1968), General Westmoreland explained that when US troops were committed in 1965

the first operational term was 'search and destroy'. Operations of this type were designed to find, fix in place, fight and destroy (or neutralise) enemy forces and their base areas and supply caches. This was essentially the traditional attack mission of the military.

But then, Westmoreland noted, the term 'search and destroy' had to be abandoned because it became 'distorted'. 'Somehow it was equated in the public mind with aimless searches in the jungle and the destruction of property.'

Philip Caputo was a front-line soldier in Vietnam and his book is a superb, macabre evocation of those aimless searches and the destruction not only of property but of men's bodies and minds as well. He was among the earliest of the Marines to be thrust by Westmoreland through Danang and out into the jungles, the mountains, the rizières and the hamlets beyond. His powers

of recall are astonishing at the very least and the events he describes are so frightening, so stupid and so squalid that at times it is hard to remember that this is not a novel.

When he arrived he had no real idea of what would happen to him; he was primed on Wilfred Owen and yet 'had learned nothing' – but it did not take many days of trudging through fetid jungles, seeing the arms, legs, trunks of friends being blown off by mines, exchanging fire with an unseen enemy, or many long nights of crouching in foxholes filled with rain, blood and urine, to begin the learning process.

Scorched by the sun, wracked by the wind and rain of the monsoon, fighting in alien swamps and jungles, our humanity rubbed off us as the protective bluing rubbed off the barrels of our rifles.

The haphazard, unpredictable and episodic nature of the fighting terrified them. 'We fought a formless war against a formless enemy who evaporated like the morning mists', and they became determined to inflict harm if only to see that 'these wraiths are really men who bleed'. They were: indeed, as one of Caputo's men said, 'they're just like us, Lieutenant, it's always the young men who die'.

As some friends were killed, others

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maimed horribly, 'we became more professional, leaner, tougher, and a callus began to grow around our hearts, a kind of emotional flak jacket that blunted the blows and stings of pity'. As the fighting intensified 'both we and the Viet Cong began to make a habit of atrocities'. The marines would raze villages on only the suspicion that a Viet Cong was there. The rules said that they should not shoot an unarmed Vietnamese unless he was running; but all doubts were suppressed by the reassurance that so far as headquarters was concerned 'if he's dead and Vietnamese, he's VC'. Only the body count really mattered.

By the end of their tour so many Marines had been 'wasted' that any recruit who reached the age of 21 was known as 'Pappy'. Of those who survived Caputo notes, 'a man does not have to be killed or wounded to become a casualty', and after a spell at base filing reports on his dead friends he volunteered again for a line company because he wanted to kill. 'I wanted us to tear their guts out with bayonets.' After his patrol had stumbled on to a mine and his men were carted, gashed and bleeding, away, he ordered the rest to eliminate the nearest hamlet.

I could hear people yelling and I saw several figures running through the white smoke. I did not feel any sense of vengeance, any more than I felt remorse or regret. I did not even feel angry. Listening to the shouts and watching the people running out of their burning homes, I did not feel anything at all.

Eventually a village chief complained after Caputo ordered the murder of two of his villagers. Caputo was court-martialled but was not allowed by his counsel to plead that murder was what body counts, extra beer (and the time to drink it) for each VC killed, fear and ignorance made men do – because that would have questioned the whole basis of the war, and the trial was designed to conceal that truth. He was acquitted, and the bloodbath continued for another nine years. Given the hatreds which he describes the astonishing thing is that it stopped in April 1975.

It has, however, been continued in Cambodia, where no one knows how many thousands of people have been killed or have starved to death since the Khmer Rouge victory that same month. The *Reader's Digest* account, by John Barron and Anthony Paul, estimates that at least 1,200,000 out of a population of about 7 million have died. This figure is that of the Carter Administration.

Their book is based principally on taped interviews with over 300 refugees. While he was doing his research Anthony Paul, the *Reader's Digest* Far Eastern editor, played me some of these tapes; they were horrifying first-hand accounts of atrocities during and after the forced evacuation of Phnom Penh. Refugees are never likely to describe the land they have left as a demi-paradise, and they sometimes like to tell their listeners what they think is expected of them; but the consistency of the tales from Cambodia is such that they cannot be dismissed. I heard some of them myself in a refugee camp in Thailand; no refugee to whom I spoke had such gruesome first-hand stories as those recounted here, but Paul spent weeks in the camps. He was terribly upset by what he

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heard and, although the use he and Barron make of statistics and other 'supporting evidence' (often from unnamed intelligence sources) is questionable, the overall picture they present is not qualitatively different from that of others who have researched this appalling saga.

But what is one to make of a book which claims to tell 'the untold story' of genocide in Cambodia and starts only on the day that the war ended; which almost totally ignores the fact that Cambodian society (never so 'gentle and smiling' as these authors would have us believe) had already been destroyed by then? There is little or no mention here of the fact that when Nixon and Kissinger began to bomb Vietnamese base camps (and, according to the Joint Chiefs themselves, Cambodian villages) secretly and illegally in 1969, the Khmer Rouge was a tiny, insignificant group with no reputation for nastiness. Sihanouk's overthrow in 1970 was in part a consequence of the way that bombing pushed the communists further into the country.

For five years after that Cambodia's weaknesses were exploited by Nixon and Kissinger, and then Kissinger and Ford, for little other purpose than to demonstrate what they saw as American 'credibility' and the resolve to defend 'Vietnamisation', itself a policy intended only to replace Lieutenant Caputo with Lieutenant Ngoc for what Kissinger himself called just 'a decent interval' before Hanoi took over. It was the war which created the Khmer Rouge; it seems likely that its brutality, and especially the indiscriminate nature of the bombing which

had spread all over the country by 1973, contributed to their own brutalisation. That, after all, is what happened to Caputo. The authors do not examine this (though in his foreword to the English edition Jon Swain does do so). Instead they inform us that old classmates of Khieu Samphan, the Khmer Rouge commander-in-chief, believe he has been impotent all his life. They therefore suggest that

the origins of some of the more extreme policies may lie in the personality of the impotent ideologue Khieu Samphan . . . numerous psychiatrists consider that chronic impotence, unless inflicted by physical factors,

is the product of profound hostility . . . Perhaps some of the deathly hostility [the Khmer Rouge were] to visit upon the Cambodian people, such as the savage slaughter of women and children as well as men, the ferocious assault on the Khmer traditions of love, courtship and family, the draconian punishment of extramarital sex, was spawned by the hostility of the unloved and unloving Khieu.

Barron and Paul admit that this is conjecture. Even as conjecture, though, it is hard to see what service is done to the Cambodian people when their ghastly plight is trivialised in such a way.

Peter Conrad

The Babbitt

The Silmarillion by J. R. R. TOLKIEN Allen & Unwin £4.95

Tolkien is, as Cliff Richard said of Elvis, 'a phenomena'. He is interesting not as an artist but as a serendipitous success. His publishers, having repented at leisure their rejection of *The Silmarillion* in 1950, now issue it to the accompaniment of cannonades of promotional fatuity. The initial printing of half a million copies in hardback marks an event commensurate, according to their press release, with 'new translations of the Bible'. Rayner Unwin, who in 1950 urged his father to 'drop *The Silmarillion*', now avers, rather like Nixon commenting on the moonshot, that it is 'the first major literary creation myth since the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh'. Of course it is nothing of the kind: it is the West Midlands posing as the universe. The puzzle is why the universe accepts, and even abets, the imposture.

Despite Rayner Unwin's bombast, *The Silmarillion* is closer to the hermetic, self-referring world of nonsense than to the oceanic expanses of mythology. Nonsense is a donnish genre, an innocent debauchery of scholarship. Lewis Carroll framed from the abstract integers of symbolic logic a world of systematised absurdity Tolkien has put philology out to play, and constructed a legend out of antiquarian neologisms. His Eldarin languages are Jabberwock in Gothic script: a sentence like 'But Morgoth sent the more, and there were Balrogs', from one of the epic combats in *The Silmarillion*, would acclimatise itself at once in Carroll's underworld of mimsy borogroves and mome raths.

Instead of inventing characters, Tolkien compiles a dictionary; instead of exploring the complexity of motive or psychological development, he rigs up fake demonstrations of linguistic change. Although *The Silmarillion* pretends to be a cosmic drama of cupidity and belligerence, its significant events are not battles but glosses, not heroic gestures but philological quibbles, learned translations from Elvish to English. Moments of truth for Tolkien's characters occur when they earn an entry in the dictionary ('I will give you a name,

and I will call you Niniel, Tear-maiden') or sprout new derivations by linguistic parthenogenesis: Beren when he loses a Silmaril rechristens himself Camlost, which means the Empty-Handed, and the fiend Melkor after he absconds with the Silmarils is cursed with the new name of Morgoth, 'the Black Enemy'. Character becomes a function of etymology, narration of topography: Tolkien describes places by manufacturing mock-kennings names for them - Nen Girith, the Shuddering Water, or Cabed Naeramarth, the Leap of Dreadful Doom.

Para-scholarship like this camouflages Tolkien's imaginative deficiencies, for although he can invent languages at will and equip them with rules of pronunciation and accentuation, conjure up putative roots and legislate procedures for semantic change, he can't actually write. His dialogue has the pricey gentility of Hollywood costume drama: 'The sooner you depart from my kingdom the better will it please me,' says Curufin, and the inversion passes off a cliché as an imperious utterance in the high style; the arachnid Ungoliant, having made a meal of the vital sap in the Tree of Valinor, hisses like Dracula, 'But I hunger still'.

In the same way that etymology stands in for character, so a flaccid syntax gives the appearance of narrative to a work which in fact drifts on without a destination. Spineless sentences unravel skeins of connectives, a succession of 'ands' which is arrested occasionally by an arbitrary assertion of bardic prerogative: 'Here', Tolkien suddenly decides, 'must be told how the Teleri came at last to the land of Aman.' But why there and not somewhere else? Obscurantism like this is, however, central to the Tolkien imposture, for it turns muddle into mystery. The magus flaunts his power by eccentrically unmaking his own narrative, rebuking any reader who tries to puzzle out what is happening and why. 'Not until the Sun passes and the Moon falls', we are warned, 'shall it be known of what substance [the Silmaril jewels] were made.' Beren returns from the mansions of the dead, but won't talk about what he found there. Ungoliant is



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briskly consigned to oblivion: 'Of the fate of Ungoliant no tale tells.' These hieratic refusals, like the ban on eating apples imposed by Tolkien's distinguished predecessor in *Genesis*, are intended as demonstrations of the sub-creator's authority, but actually they confess his incompetence: the work is ventilated with gaps where motives ought to be, with deadends of inconsequence where there should be continuation. Incoherence is the wizard's most jealously guarded privilege.

This is no new cosmology, but mere harmless academic doodling. Philology has escaped from the syllabus, and remakes the world in its own crabbed and cranky image. It is no coincidence that Tolkien began writing *The Hobbit* on a blank leaf of an examination script he was marking. How then does one account for his extraordinary popularity? The usual explanation is that the age craves the freedom of heroic fantasy; yet it is this which Tolkien peculiarly does not provide. The political morality of his works is at odds with their form: the context is epic, but the spirit is bureaucratic.

Tolkien is deeply suspicious of heroic ambition (the lust of Gandalf and Aragorn for the ring, and of Morgoth for the Silmarils) and protects the rights of the small man, the half-human weakling Frodo, whose feat of endurance is accomplished by toiling conscientiousness, not chivalric ardour. Middle-Earth is an unexotic welfare state governed on the Westminster model, with a constitution which separates powers so as to check individual initiatives: the Silmarils which Morgoth covets for his crown are finally distributed through nature, 'one in the airs of heaven, and one in the fires of the heart of the world, and one in the deep waters', just as at the end of *The Lord of the Rings* the regime of Sauron is overturned.

Tolkien pleases not because he is arcane and outlandish but because he is an unadventurous defender of mediocrity. Middle-Earth is a suburb; its hobbits are Babbits, homespun, humdrum shopkeepers, lineal descendants of Christina Rossetti's mercantile goblins and Beatrix Potter's tweedy bunnies. Tolkien's wisdom is proverbial: this allegory embodies the prudential dreariness of an elfin petit-bourgeoisie in such maxims as 'dawn is brief and the day full often belies its promise' or 'he that sows lies shall not lack of a harvest'. He is, in a word, kitsch.

Back in the days when Tolkien's undying elves were adopted by the permanent adolescents of the American university, the campus graffiti used to say, 'Tolkien is hobbit-forming'. There was no need for the pun: his simpler secret is that he is habit-forming, like soap opera. He can be read over and over, as he is by addicts, because he guarantees a consoling tedium, a sedative longevity. His is a soap opera world of happenings but not events, which people pass through rather than inhabit (*The Silmarillion* contains such troops of transients that a 40-page index is required), a world which is continuous without being rationally consecutive, absorbing without being interesting. Only too appropriately, his sacred turf of the West Midlands is now the location of the *Crossroads* motel.

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A Precipice Marked V

A Change of Perspective: The Letters of Virginia Woolf 1923-1928 edited by Nigel Nicolson *Hogarth Press* £12.50

We have arrived at Volume III, the volume of maturity. Mrs Woolf is 41, she is an established novelist and critic who uses her voice with complete confidence and control, because she knows its necessary rhythms as well as she knows her husband, family and friends. She can be businesslike, she can tease, she can discuss her reading and – a little – her writing. At times she indulges in baroque flattery and equally baroque self-abasement: she is 'your old rake and fire-side hag' to Lytton Strachey, a mere 'fungus' to his sister Pernel, principal of Newnham, 'at the top of the trees; magnificent, adored'. The 'poor Woolves' put in many appearances. All the same they are not so poor: she is writing, with some self-questioning, for fashion magazines and American papers, they are building a bathroom and two lavatories in the country at last and presently they buy a car and travel abroad a good deal.

Chats with Vanessa about servants have been banished, and although there are some spectacularly malicious strands, few of the letters are given over to spite or even trivia. Some, to the dying Jacques Raverat or to Barbara Bagenal when she was ill, are clearly offered as gifts, written to entertain, distract and reassure. Only very occasionally does a shimmer of unease appear, malice or an odd sexual joke hinting at the disturbed edge of her mind. Her physical health was only slightly uneven during these five years from 1923 to 1928, her mind was relatively calm and she produced five important books without setback: *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Common Reader*, *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*.

Years crowned with success, then: and also with love. I doubt there can be other love letters in the language quite like the ones printed here. They can be read without a twinge: open, unembarrassed tributes from one woman to another for her beauty and seductiveness, direct appeals to her to come and hold her in her arms. They don't make too many claims. There is never any doubt as to what the writer feels ('odd that ... you should be to me like a sunny patch on a hot bank') but she watches herself. When Lytton Strachey asked her advice about love, whether to go on, over the precipice, she wrote to her lover,

Stop, stop! I cried, thinking instantly of you. Now what would happen if I let myself go over? Answer me that. Over what? You'll say. A precipice marked V.

V was Vita, the writer Victoria Sackville-West, otherwise Mrs Harold Nicolson, whose reputation as a Sapphist (Mrs Woolf's usual term) was already established. VW

had learnt an easy acceptance of male homosexuality from her early Bloomsbury days; the strong attachments of her girlhood were to other women and despite her profound emotional and intellectual dependence on her husband she seems to have had no erotic feeling for him. His view of Vita, given in his naturally discreet autobiography, is interesting. He admired her appearance as that of 'a beautiful flower in bloom' and adds that she was the only person he ever knew who actually *strode* into a room – before meeting her he thought striding occurred only in novels. Her aristocratic manner disquieted him, particularly when she was peremptory to strangers. She was at home only in a castle, he said. But for Virginia this bloom and colour and aristocratic will grow increasingly exciting. In the light of the letters, Quentin Bell's account of her feelings appears altogether too subdued and guarded. Indeed, it is quite clear that Vita, ten years the younger, did indeed stride into Virginia's life, aroused and seduced her and drew from her tenderness and excitement in a way no one else ever did:

How I watched you! How I felt – now what was it like! Well, somewhere I have seen a little ball kept bubbling up and down on the spray of a fountain: the fountain is you; the ball me. It is a sensation I get only from you. It is physically stimulating, restful at the same time I feel supplanted and anointed ...

Can there be a better image of love than this?

The editor describes the letters as discreet, and I suppose this must depend on one's view of discretion. To me they appear explicitly erotic. Virginia confided in no one, though she indulged herself in some broad hints to Vanessa, and her care not to ruffle Leonard's feelings too much was not intended to deceive him. But she was blessedly free of any sense of naughtiness.

The volume ends as the five years of achievement and love culminate in the publication of *Orlando*, Virginia's offering, dedicated to Vita and adorned with several photographs of her. The book was a success with the public but it is difficult to read today, too often whimsical in tone and somehow like notes for a highbrow village pageant in which the lord of the manor's daughter will play all the best parts (of course the Stephens always like fancy dress). It approaches the subject of bisexuality, but so obliquely and fantastically that it did not offend as did Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness*, published and prosecuted in the same year.

Mr Nicolson asserts that it was Vita who kept the relationship in control; and since he is her son, he is in a position to say so. May we have all *her* letters in due course? Here there are only snatches, tantalising, as when she writes to her husband of Virginia: 'She has a sweet and childlike nature, from which her intellect is completely separate.' (And this would seem to be borne out by her letters to Leonard and Vanessa.) On another occasion, Vita suggested to Virginia that dumb people may feel more than stylists and received a memorable reply, defending articulacy: 'After all, what is a lovely phrase? One that has mopped up as much Truth as it can hold.' And that is what she sought in all her writing.

Brian W. Aldiss

Ever Outward

The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe by STEVEN WEINBERG *Deutsch* £4.50

On still autumn days when leaves drift languidly down, it is hard to realise that we live in an almighty explosion – the almighty explosion, the universe. Nor are still autumn nights much help. Staring up at the Milky Way through the lens of our galaxy, we perceive everything as immemorably still. Yet the stars move at speeds of up to several hundred kilometres a second. They are debris of the pristine explosion, and violent motion is an intrinsic property of the universe.

That explosion began between 10 and 20 thousand million years ago: fossil microwave radiation can still be detected by the instruments of the new astronomy. There was a certain puny grandeur about the assertion of the 17th-century divine, Bishop Ussher, that God performed the act of Creation in the year 4004 BC. Ever since the Bishop's day, astronomers and scientists of all persuasions have been extending the time scale – and our imaginations with it. We are paradoxically unamazed by our amazing familiarity with distant past and distant future. The Expanding Universe is something that has happened in the mind as well as the cosmos.

This bold, brief and lucid book summarises the recent advances in astrophysics which have revolutionised cosmology and our view of creation. Steven Weinberg is a professor of physics at Harvard, and Senior Scientist at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Laboratory. Bringing an easy manner to bear on difficult matter, he demonstrates a model of the early universe in the first minutes of its existence.

One of the most dramatic moves in establishing the new model was the work of two radio astronomers, Penzias and Wilson, in New Jersey in 1964. Clearing the pigeons out of their antenna, they picked up and identified cosmic radio waves at 7.35 centimetres which proved to be microwave radiation left over from the early universe that still fills all space. Calculations showed that this radiation had an equivalent temperature of 3.5 degrees Kelvin – that is, above absolute zero. Surviving the subsequent expansion, it cooled in inverse proportion to the size of the universe. This microwave clue, together with the discoveries of the recession of distant galaxies, has led to the establishment of what is now called the standard model, popularly known as the 'big bang' theory. It replaces the 'steady state' theory.

Professor Weinberg says, engagingly, 'I cannot deny a feeling of unreality in writing about the first three minutes as if we really know what we are talking about.' Other theories await positive resolution. We are still unable to determine whether the universe is infinite and will continue to ex-

pand into an ultimate heat death, or whether it is finite (the argument hinges on whether the cosmic density is less or more than the critical density. See *Glossary*) and will start to contract again after some 50,000 million years. If the latter, the oscillations might be almost infinite, limited only by a sort of sludging up called bulk viscosity.

But what about those first three minutes? With the modesty characteristic of men who take light years in their stride, Weinberg admits that the first one-hundredth of a second presents its difficulties. Gauge theories help, but we are dealing with difficult particles like quarks and rho mesons (the latter are so unstable that they can barely cross an atomic nucleus although they travel at almost the speed of light). Directly after that first one-hundredth of a second of creation, processes become easier to visualise.

'The universe is simpler and easier to describe than it ever will be again,' says Weinberg. We are dealing with a plasma possibly four light years across, expanding rapidly and already cooled to a temperature of 100,000 million degrees K. This temperature is much hotter than the centre of the hottest star – none of the components of matter, no atoms or even the nuclei of atoms, could hold together. Elementary particles, the study of modern high-energy nuclear physics, abound: electrons and positrons charge about like free-range hens. So do photons; light floods the universe – luminiferous aether indeed! It seethes with an undifferentiated soup of matter and radiation. Its density is 3.8 million times the density of tap water. It is opaque.

As the seconds tick by – time is as hot and new-whelped as everything else – the

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rate of expansion drops together with the temperature. When 13.82 seconds have elapsed since that 'unspeakably unfamiliar' first one-hundredth of a second, the temperature falls to 3,000 million degrees K. Electrons and positrons begin to disappear; stable nuclei like helium will soon form.

It will take 700,000 years for the universe to cool through expansion to a temperature of 3,000 degrees. Electrons join with nuclei to form stable atoms at this temperature. Only then does the universe become transparent to radiation. For the first time, radiation and matter become separate; galaxies and stars begin to form. The ionised and undifferentiated soup starts to separate out. Most of the universe's stores of energy are now present in the form of matter. Earlier, radiation held more energy. The process of the change is not clearly understood, while the theory of the formation of galaxies remains one of the outstanding riddles of astrophysics.

After the suns, the planets. We are another step on the way to the absurd position, 10,000 million years later, where human brains - formed from material residues of that ancient violence - try to make sense of the whole august creative process. August but perhaps meaningless, Weinberg admits. 'The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless.' Unless, one might add, life can be enjoyed as an end in itself, defying entropy; but humanity appears more an incidental than an end product.

Of course, the brilliant model rests upon certain assumptions warranted by modern physics. One of these assumptions is the Cosmological Principle, the hypothesis that the universe is homogeneous and isotropic. Professor Weinberg, a fair-minded man, cautions us, 'It must always be admitted that our simple cosmological models may describe only a small part of the universe, or a limited portion of its history.' Apart from its meaty main course,

the book offers speculative side dishes. The conditioning of astronomers is discussed; it retarded the development of the big bang theory. Other factors causing delay were the communication barriers between theorists and experimentalists and - interestingly - a reluctance of physicists to take seriously any theory that dared to challenge the reign of Chaos and old Night and deal with the early universe.

Weinberg also has an aside about reaching that crucial 3,000 million degrees K. It may represent a 'phase transition' such as water undergoes when it becomes ice. Possibly a form of symmetry was lost when the universe 'froze' at this temperature. Shall we one day enter other domains where the interaction of physical forces has taken place differently? It's a beautiful book. I admire it and passionately wish I understood.

Betty Friedan

On Aggression

The Inevitability of Patriarchy by STEVEN GOLDBERG Temple Smith £6.95

When I was in England this summer for the publication of *It Changed My Life*, a personal account of the women's movement as I led and lived it, everywhere I went in public I was countered by a chubby young fellow-American in cowboy boots whom I'd never heard of before, though his dubious pseudo-scientific case for male biological supremacy was, for some reason, being seized on by the British media as a serious new development. The publication of *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* several years earlier in the US had so little impact on the women's movement it attacked, much less the general public, that I was not even aware of its arrival. So when I walked into a BBC studio one night in July, and learned that I was supposed to join Juliet Mitchell and two other distinguished British feminist scholars and journalists in debating *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* with this young man for an entire hour, I suggested that we should not allow ourselves to be used by the BBC to dignify an otherwise insignificant but insidious little book, which uses false biology to deny female equality much as the Nazis, and American slave-owners before them, used biology to justify racial oppression. I proposed that we simply spend a few minutes explaining that even if everything Steven Goldberg had to say about patriarchy and male hormones were true, women would still need equal opportunity in society right now, and then spend the rest of the hour comparing our own British and American experiences with that reality. The pompous MC and the BBC brass reacted as if I had suggested bombing the studio. We women had been brought there only to discuss the book; we were not there to discuss women on our own terms. Besides, the BBC had flown the author over here, and he was being wined and dined by the leading publishers and editors all over London. Goldberg was getting the serious VIP treatment in England. I wondered why.

After I got home from London, I checked and found that scientists in the research of sex differences had been sufficiently concerned over Goldberg's misuse of scientific data to expose and demolish it in various scholarly publications when his book appeared in 1974. The misuse of 'social

biology' to resuscitate reaction surfaced first in the US as a resurgence of racism. When the Nobel laureate Arthur Jensen ventured out of his own field to tour American universities lecturing that blacks were doomed by heredity to low levels of intelligence, regardless of environment or educational opportunity, students and faculty demonstrated in protest. *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* was not important enough to command such attention, and I'm sorry that an American book of so little consequence has made any impact in Britain.

The premises of Goldberg's theory are as follows: biology determines that all systems of hierarchy will be dominated by males. The emotions, stemming from biology, that determine our behaviour have not changed since man first walked the earth. 'Patriarchy is universal,' says Goldberg:

All anthropologists agree that there has never been a society which failed to associate hierarchical authority and leadership in these areas with men . . . I do not argue that females cannot perform high status roles as well as males, but only that they are not, for psychophysiological reasons, as strongly motivated to attain them . . .

The male biological advantage, in his theory, comes from a much higher level of testosterone. Higher levels of this hormone are associated with tomboyishness in human hermaphrodites and with aggression in laboratory animals. Human aggression is undefined in this theory, which requires only that there be a physiologically generated difference between males and females which engenders in males, to a greater degree than females, 'dominance tendency'; 'Males feel more strongly the "need" for dominance because they are built that way.' Male-female differences are statistical, not absolute, so the existence of dominant or aggressive women who seek, attain and perform leadership roles as vigorously as men does not disprove this theory, but male dominance tendency, flowing from hormones, determines the limits of social institutions.

Goldberg 'defines' *feminist* as 'one who denies the central importance of the sexual/physiological differences I stress'. Feminists argue that women are unaggressive because of their socialisation, he says, but if society did not direct girls to 'roles only women can play', or roles with such low status that

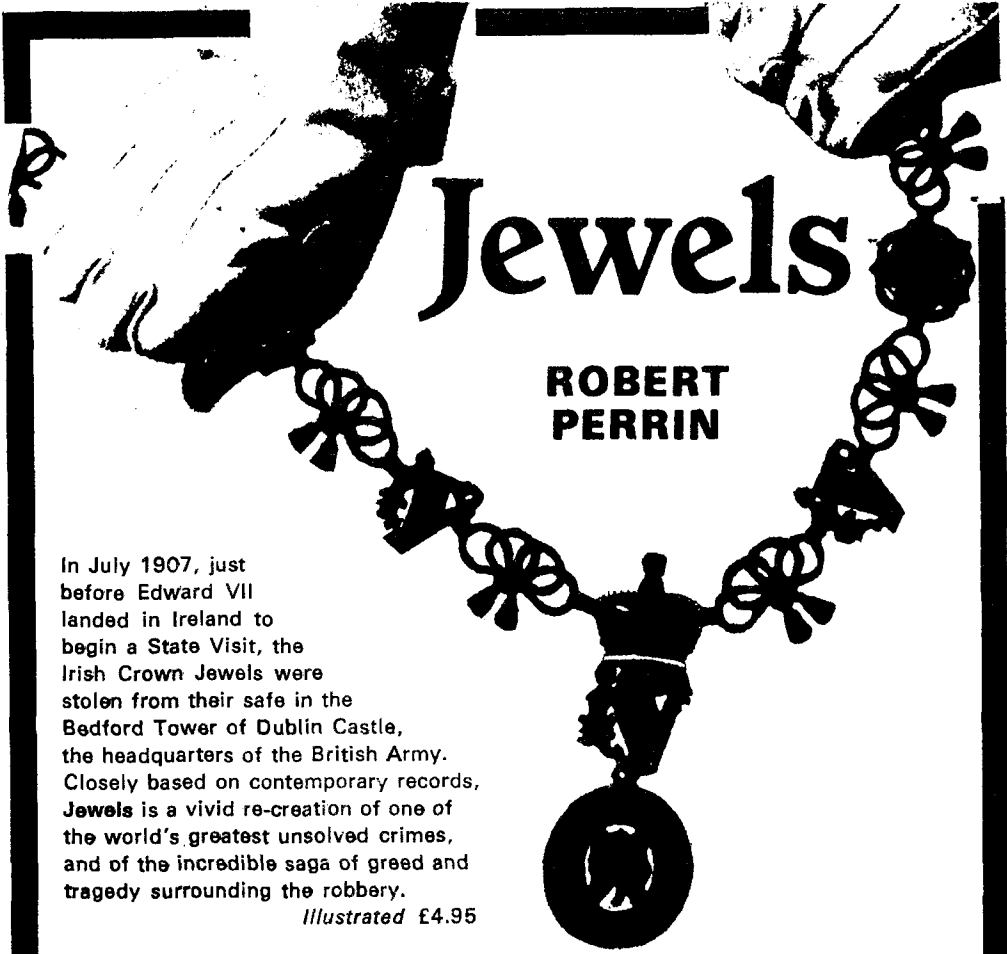
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men would not strive for them, most women would lose in the competition because of men's hormonal advantage; women would thus be forced to live as failures. Even if women work harder and longer than men, women must fail because of their lack of the male hormone.

There is no alternative; this is simply the way it is. At the bottom of it all, man's job is to protect woman, and woman's is to protect her infant; in nature, all else is luxury.

As the *American Sociological Review* summed it up: 'At root, this book is a splendidly anachronistic revival of the Herrenvolk mode of scientific explanation.' For while scientists would probably agree that men have higher levels of testosterone and that authority systems have been dominated by men, it does not follow that testosterone is linked to leadership. Since Goldberg does not define 'aggression' or 'dominance tendency' – the supposed by-product of the testosterone excess which insures men's leadership – his theory can't really be tested. But the very scientists whose work on hermaphrodites he cites as the key link between testosterone and aggression have stated that aggressiveness is the wrong variable on which to assess hormonal male-female differences: it is not a primary trait of tomboyishness and 'probably not of boyishness either, except as a shibboleth of shoddy popular psychology and news media'.

The study on which Goldberg rests his hormonal basis for male superiority was

subsequently found to lead to no such conclusion. Goldberg cites the work of Ehrhardt and Money showing that girls who were exposed *in utero* to unusually high levels of androgens later developed higher IQs than the population average. More recent work by the same scientist has shown that prenatal androgens do *not* raise girls' IQs. Ehrhardt compared a group of fetally androgenised girls with their own normal sisters. The androgenised girls did have higher than average IQs, just as in the original work, but so did their normal sisters. The girls who had been subject to excess androgens prenatally were no brighter than their sisters who had no hormonal complications.

Even if it were true that all societies so far have been patriarchal and dominated by men, and even if that dominance is based on biological differences, it is irrelevant to the situation forcing women to demand equal opportunity in America and Britain today. Even if they are sorely handicapped by lack of testosterone, it is inescapably necessary for women at this stage in human evolution to move to equality in society.

I have always said that equality for women has only been possible – and necessary – at this particular moment in human evolution. Goldberg himself insists that his case for male hormonal aggressive superiority would not apply to a non-hierarchical society where men and women had to take similar economic roles. In fact, the modern women's movement for equality comes at a period of enormous technological change forcing – and making it possible for – men and women to play similar economic roles. Sexual equality, childbearing and machismo (or aggressive dominance) already have different survival value as we move into post-industrial society. It is not easy for American or British women, who were brought up in the illusion that they could live all their lives in that role 'only a woman can play', who may have wanted or still want nothing more than to nurture their children and be protected by a man, to be forced to move into society on their own. Their aggressiveness has been turned inward against themselves, turned into headaches and depression, or exerted on helpless children, or a covert hostility towards the husbands they depended on. An entire literature of family pathology and psychological disorders might be cited as evidence of women's frustrated aggressive energy and need for dominance.

I do not define feminism as the denial of sexual difference but as the affirmation of the total personhood of woman and man, and their equal right to full participation in society. Differences in style, capacity, energy – and hormonal flow – may become more or less important when women and men, perforce, move to similar economic roles. It may be liberating, exhilarating and perhaps more of a key to future survival if men eventually became more intuitive and sensitive, and women more confident and assertive. The female style and voice may change the very rubric of medicine, law, theology and economics, once it is freely and equally asserted. If women begin to compete more assertively in society and apply their intuition in the public

sphere, and in fields of abstract thought once open only to men – and as men liberate for their own public and private use intuitions and sensibilities once regarded as feminine – what on earth will happen to those hormones of Goldberg's? Will women die sooner, or men live longer, with some new, 'feminine' flexibility for survival?

The hoopla over *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* could be seen as the mobilisation of right-wing forces to drive back the women's movement for equality in Britain. In the US, the Equal Rights Amendment has been blocked by a sinister, well-financed campaign of hysterical propaganda, the John Birchers, the Catholic Church hierarchy and profiteers and demagogues who don't want to lose that huge gullible mass of timid, passive, dependent women, women they could push around for their own profit and power. Its reception in England could simply be a last gasp of panic from the British champions of that frail old-school machismo, who may be afraid that women won't love them any more when they don't have to depend on them for everything. The reality, however, may not be as bad as either of us fear.

Louis Finger

The Manly One

The Honourable Schoolboy by JOHN LE CARRÉ Hodder & Stoughton £4.95

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy seemed to many Le Carré fans his probable last word on how the British Secret Service really works – or, rather, really doesn't work. He knew it all, we'd long ago admiringly conceded, but now it felt as if he'd taught us to know just as much as him. The book was saturated, often exhaustingly, with familiar-looking expertise and spared us nothing in its footnoting of the roles of lamplighters, moles, branch-lines, and the rest. What else could Le Carré wring out of a subject that was already getting tediously worked over by a dozen lesser talents? Not only had he used up his last crumb of know-how, he'd also cashed in the ultimate spy-novel plot – i.e. the whole set up had been spying on itself for years.

As if to acknowledge that the game was done, the book closed with the Circus utterly in disarray: betrayed, discredited and even more useless than it had been before. Le Carré, it appeared, was taking pleasure in dismantling toys he thought he had grown out of, and the general fear among his readers was that he would now be obliged to take another crack at the Serious Novel – visions of unreadable pretentiousness (à la *The Naïve and Sentimental Lover*) swam depressingly before our eyes. Rather another spy yarn, however mechanical and self-parodying, than *that*. We knew, though, that Le Carré was a solemn fellow, irked that he'd been pigeon-holed. The omens were not good.

It was a relief, then, when news of *The*

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THOMAS HINDE, *Sunday Telegraph*

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ALLAN MASSIE, *Scotsman*

'This writer who, no matter what his theme, can stir the grit of our deeper consciousness.'

EDDIE WOODS, *Morning Star*

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Honourable Schoolboy was announced; it was to be a spy book, starring Smiley – whose task it would be to revitalise the Circus by pulling off a giant coup. Jerry Westerbury would be summoned from retirement, and the heavily researched setting would be South East Asia around the time of the American collapse. If Le Carré was going to flog a dead horse, one could think of worse-sounding ways to go about it. We prepared ourselves to make major allowances, to forgive much in the way of weariness and strain.

Unfortunately, more charity than that is needed in order to cope amiably with this deadeningly spun-out display of unassimilated guide-book info mixed in with all the stock Le Carré plays. The central suspense line is thoroughly ungripping, not to say lethargic, and the Research thrusts itself from almost every page in the form of huge, inert slabs of topography and local colour. There's an unbelievable amount of sheer debriefing in the book, and many a character exists solely to pass on to us some necessary piece of Eastern lore. Embedded in all this are the main characters, Smiley and Westerbury. Smiley remains as shadowy as ever; he's been cuckolded a few more times since we last met but that's about the extent of his development. Westerbury, though, does signal an attempt by Le Carré to extend and deepen his characterisation of the unillusioned agent-figure, the battered pursuer of goals that must not be too closely called in question. Le Carré has never been much good at dealings between individuals (it's a novelty when he equips a member of the cast with more than two or three identifying traits) but he has always dangled vague romantic prospects before the noses of his run-down, manly types. In this book, he makes the mistake of permitting some fruition, and thus involving the manly one in weighty introspection. The result is depressingly cartoon-like – and all the more so in the operations-room atmosphere that provides the context for these intermittent flourishes of Sensitivity and Insight.

Much of all this could be swallowed if the book had any pace, but the things that are wrong with Le Carré, at the level of seriousness he no doubt feels he's aimed for here, totally debilitate the book's appeal as a run-of-the-mill espionage yarn. What happens next to Le Carré will no doubt depend on the kind of contract he has with his American publisher.

Robert Conquest
Porlock: One in Four

Going up the hill in bottom gear
The engine labours, a rising scream,
Growing insupportable, like fear

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Cliff-edge of subhuman singing,

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Whitney Balliett is the *New Yorker's* jazz correspondent. He is not as well-known as comparable critics in the opera house, but such notoriety as he does have he came by very honourably. Twenty years ago, he concentrated on descriptive characterisations of jazzmen's styles, bashing his brains for verbal equivalents to sounds: 'Jimmy Rushing, the suave, blimp-sized blues shouter, has always sounded as if he were wearing spats and morning coat and had just had a good laugh.' Balliett's writing at this stage was a sort of prolonged and oblique onomatopoeia. Probably only a jazz fan who had the aimed-for sounds already in his head, or on a nearby record turntable, could get real pleasure out of Balliett's attempts to reproduce them on the page. Five years ago, indeed, I managed to obtain the American first edition of his first collection, *The Sound of Surprise* - a book confident enough to open with the words 'It's a compliment to jazz that nine-tenths of the voluminous writing about it is bad' - for the laughable sum of ten pence.

Over the last 20 years, Balliett has been steadily relaxing. Circumstances have helped him. He has been able to write longer and more sociable pieces, and his reputation has gained him more and more friendly access to the musicians themselves. They now appear in his work not as assortments of squeaks and moans but as troubled citizens like the rest of us, while Balliett himself has changed from a furious logomanic impressionist into a great listener. The new book, *Improvising*, is full of verbatim-looking monologues by famous players, whose tones of voice Balliett clearly now believes will tell as much about their musical natures as his adjectives ever could. And so will the tones of their wives' voices. (Mrs Pee Wee Russell: 'I hate the clarinet. Pee Wee's playing embarrasses me.')

Great soloists are necessarily great egotists, so it's amazing that they come out of this exercise as well as they do. Only Buddy Rich - 'I'm told I'm not humble, but who is?' - seems to have devised no mechanism for discharging his psychic electricity harmlessly into the atmosphere. (Most drummers, actually, are walking refutations of the idea that doing something violent helps you work off your aggressions.) The pianist Earl Hines has a similarly imposing self-respect, but his harangues tend to start and finish amiably, and you can understand how he got away with holding a big band together, with intermittent crises, for the best part of two decades. The late New Orleans trumpeter Henry 'Red' Allen, a man whose face none too happily combined the characteristics of a very old bloodhound and a party balloon in the last stages of deflation (you can say anything you like about Red Allen's face: it's all true), comes across

as so amiable that you wish you could have invited him over for a 'little Scotch erini' this very day - though when his grand-daughters drop by, you get a glimpse of Ego again: '"This is Alcornette," Allen said. "She's eleven. Pearl May's maiden name is Alcorn, and of course there had to be some mention of a trumpet or cornet."' Then again, perhaps it wasn't his idea.

One or two of the white players in the book, Red Norvo and Jess Stacy in particular, have a cooled-down, nice-old gentlemanly calm that doesn't give Balliett's ear quite enough to bite on (if you smell what I mean); but a discreet application of authentic *Franglais* makes the dashing Stephane Grappelli hilarious. 'Django loved fishing! He would cut a branch and fasten some incredible string and find a worm and catch a big fish while people with *moderne* stick catch nothing.' Ever the stuffed shirts of the Modern Jazz Quartet heave briefly with the breath of life when the members talk about themselves instead of standing around looking like (and playing like) a bunch of wine-waiters.

As if to test himself, Balliett includes a couple of pieces on men before his time: the drummer Sid Catlett (this lovingly reworks material Balliett has chewed over before) and King Oliver, the legendary cornetist who, as Balliett rightly remarks, has yet to be 'declared human'. It's happened to all the heroes, 'except Joe Oliver, who, mysterious, almost primeval, remains enshrined'. Balliett's essay does not do much to dispel the mystery, except to suggest, plausibly, that Oliver may have been eight years older than we assume; but in remarking that 'Oliver's statements, particularly his muted ones, have a special long-ago sweetness and directness and simplicity', he says all that needs to be said about the great enigma's eerie late recordings. And I have an idea people will be saying much the same thing, in 20 years or so, about Balliett's book.

Craig Raine

Floods

Bright as meringues, the swans sweep sideways down the passionate water.

The boathouse punts are magnetised, and the rain scores a bullseye every time.

There is a bank of froth against the bridge. It has thrown in the sponge...

The flood shines like Occam's razor. Every quibble returns to the torrent,

and even the slow digressions at our feet are part of an overall argument.

They cover all the points of grass. What single-minded brilliance,

what logic!
Not one of us can look away.

Mervyn Jones

Bedside Book

Hospital by POLLY TOYNBEE *Hutchinson*
£4.95

This book is about having a baby in hospital, children in hospital, a serious operation, night in the casualty department, living on a kidney-machine, the care of the aged and helpless, the servitude and grandeur of working in the Health Service, and by implication quite a few other subjects. Thus, a majority of the population will find something in it not merely of interest but of immediate or probable personal concern. It's the sort of book of which one thinks – how astonishing that it hasn't been written before. How gratifying, however, that it has been written by Polly Toynbee. She succeeds in being hugely informative but not didactic, directly involved but not obtrusive, affected by justified emotions but not sentimental.

The hospital in which she spent five months, notebook at the ready and sensitivity switched on, is the London Hospital in Whitechapel Road. Nowhere else is quite like it. It holds a place among the select ranks of the great teaching hospitals, with extensive resources, pioneering specialities and distinguished consultants; yet, to cite

Miss Toynbee's preface, 'it is more like a general hospital than any of the other teaching hospitals, as it still has strong roots in the community'. East End people drop in, feeling at home and preferring its services to those of their own GPs and dentists. Whether it's entirely of the East End – as distinct from 'for the East End' – is another matter. Miss Toynbee notes, as she would at Guy's and the rest of the teaching hospitals, and as she wouldn't at the average general hospital, that there are hardly any black or Asian nurses. She has an interesting few pages about a Bengali patient who spoke no English, with whom none of the staff could communicate. Sometimes the hospital calls in expensive interpreters from an agency. Since Bengalis are nowadays the 'poor Jews' of this part of the East End, and since unemployment is high, something is wrong here.

Having said that Miss Toynbee has carried out her project superbly, I'm left with a doubt whether it was the best possible project. I mean that she might have invested her five months in visits to a selection of hospitals – large and small, metropolitan and remote, grand and humble. A little knowledge of any kind of institution (schools are a good example) teaches that the variety is tremendous. Factors such as local tradition, high or low morale, quality of staff, influence with central authority, and the personality of individuals holding authority can make all the difference. The English value of decentralisation makes this truer than in most other countries. In the

hospital world particularly, there's an intense resistance to anything that smacks of uniformity or 'levelling'. A consultant is quoted as saying that he has no loyalty to the Health Service, but only to his patients and his hospital; and I think that this view, though perhaps more fervently held among consultants than among junior doctors, is representative. Indeed, as Miss Toynbee remarks, each consultant has his private empire within a hospital like the London, and departments wage constant warfare for funds and supplies. So the disparity between the medical care received by Mr A and Mr Z, who in theory have equal rights, is an immense problem, of which Polly Toynbee is certainly aware but which she is precluded from fully expounding.

Hospital, in fact, raises a good many general issues which must in the last resort be politically determined. One is the gulf between medical treatment and environmental health, dramatised by Miss Toynbee in the inability of doctors to get people rehoused. Another is the waste of hospital resources traceable to the lack of health centres or even a respectable GP network. Another is the pitifully inadequate provision for the chronic sick (a patient in the Cheshire Homes costs the taxpayers £67 a week, a patient in hospital costs £300 a week, but the Cheshire Homes have very little room). Miss Toynbee states these issues squarely but, as a good reporter, doesn't analyse them when they go beyond her observation. Her book could, valuably, have been twice the length.

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Jeremy Treglown

Puff Puff Puff

Quartet In Autumn by BARBARA PYM Macmillan £3.95

Who Is Teddy Villanova? by THOMAS BERGER Eyre Methuen £3.95

In the Miro District by PETER TAYLOR Chatto and Windus £4.50

The Plague Dogs by RICHARD ADAMS Allen Lane £4.50

Everyone will be chafing to hear about *The Plague Dogs*, but first Barbara Pym. Until recently, when she was praised by Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil in the *TLS*, her readers must largely have belonged to the same Oxbridge Closed Award category as her central characters, nearly all practising communicants of the C of E resident in the Home Counties. It's a world she wrote about amusingly in *Excellent Women* (1952) and *A Glass of Blessings* (1958), and although her edge comes partly from satire on the apparently incidentless lives of Anglo-Catholic spinsters and childless, jobless spouses of civil servants, she doesn't lose sight of the pathos of their situation:

after all, life was like that for most of us – the small unpleasantnesses rather than the great tragedies, the little useless longings

rather than the great renunciations and dramatic love affairs of history or fiction.

The narrator is the central character in both these novels, and while she is different in each case and held at some distance, the fictions suffer from having to maintain her always rather prim, sentimental outlook. The trouble with women who say things like 'There are so many days when the air really is like wine – a delicate white wine, perhaps Vouvray drunk on the banks of the Loire' is that they are very boring to spend much time with. So the impersonally narrated *Quartet In Autumn*, Miss Pym's latest fiction, starts with an advantage which pays off in various ways. Her chief characters – two spinsters, a widower and a bachelor, all nearing retirement as clerks in the same office – are skilfully differentiated in lives which, except in the perhaps over-organised last pages, are determinedly independent of one another, though connected. The narrative itself is plain and appropriately diligent, faithfully and unsentimentally recording the details of solitary human behaviour in old age – Marcia going upstairs to the front bedroom to watch her visitor leave, Edwin carrying his raincoat in cloudless weather. And this baldness earns the novel its only rhetorical moment, when Letty dreams of her youth: 'All gone, that time, those people . . . Letty woke up and lay for some time meditating on the strangeness of life slipping away like this.' The incident comes early and stays with you, though despite its implication and that of the novel's title, the con-

clusion is almost romantically optimistic.

One of the good things about *Quartet In Autumn* is that for once Barbara Pym's characters don't spend much time casting about for appropriate literary quotations – unlike Richard Adams, whose new beast-fable I'll come to in a minute, when I've mentioned Thomas Berger's also very allusive, though in this case literary-comical-fantastical, parodical-satirical-unpredictable *Who Is Teddy Villanova?*. Berger belongs to the small-hero school of Woody Allen and Dustin Hoffman (who played the lead in the film of Berger's *Little Big Man*). His new narrator, a harassed, shrill-voiced private detective called Russel Wren, is well down to size, constantly beaten up by men who may or may not be mobsters or cops, and repeatedly taken for a schoolboy or a homosexual or a schoolboy homosexual. His mock-euphuistic style produces some good gags but the novel hasn't quite the accumulation of time-bombs that farce needs, or the complete unpredictability of successful fantasy.

The Plague Dogs coming up, but just a brief word about *In the Miro District*. The best of these short stories are about rich adolescents in prohibition Tennessee. 'Daphne's Lover', in particular, subtly establishes its narrator, living a vicarious sex-life through his best friend and justifying the process in a pretentiously self-deceptive way: 'I tell myself that a healthy imagination is like a healthy appetite and must be fed. If you do not feed it the lives of your friends, I maintain, then you are apt to feed it your own life.' Several of the pieces are mysteriously printed as if they were blank verse, but these too are often deft in their psychology and, if sometimes overwritten, factually interesting for the account they give of their time and place.

Now then: The Whitehall Aesop. The story is about two talking dogs, Snitter and Rowf, who escape from a research laboratory in the Lake District and join league with 'the tod', a fox. Because of what the scientists have done to his brain, Snitter talks deranged nonsense of the quaintly perceptive, Shakespearean-fool kind; and the fox is a canny, plainspeaking yokel, so that the trio make up a sort of Cruft's *King Lear*. But I'm not at all sure that children will like it. They should be OK with, for example, 'Rattle and bump and clanking of wheels and puff puff puff from somewhere in front' (= old-style train, right?), but they might be put off by difficult allusions to parliamentary scandals and lengthy satire on Civil Service procedures, not to speak of all the literary and historical references which make the book read like the prize-day speech of a berserk headmaster. The biggest puzzle, though, is the way the human characters talk – 'half a mol!', 'like a good 'un', 'here's mud in your eye', 'tickety-boo'. Perhaps it's a historical novel, rather than a fable. Who can tell?

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Charles Fox

Harmony Inn

And The Bands Played On by SID COLIN
Elm Tree Books £5.50

'And The Bands Played On' Decca DDV
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The Golden Age of British Dance Bands,
Vols 1-7 World Records SM 320-7 £2.30
each

No byway in London has changed its character so much as Archer Street, nowadays a gloomy annexe to Soho night-life yet between the wars the setting for a very different kind of flesh market. Dance-band musicians gathered there to exchange tittle-tattle or to pick up gigs. Famous bandleaders, stars of the wireless loudspeaker, strolled those pavements too, even if they skipped having a cup of tea at the Harmony Inn.

Those lounging figures in double-breasted suits or hairy plus-fours, violin or saxophone case held at the ready, could have provided Graham Greene with material for another entertainment. Unfortunately, no writer of consequence ever got to grips with that secretive little world. Somewhere in one of his neglected novels Aldous Huxley comments on 'the wailing of muted saxophones', his expertise only too typical of the way litterateurs behaved when describing what went on at Ma Meyrick's 43 or in the ballrooms of those gargantuan hotels. Even the delineator of Agatha Runcible never sized up the realities of that unique sector of the class war.

And it was class rather than economics, the rich and well-born dancing to the music of highly-paid upstarts. Bandboys parked their Ford V8s or Aston Martins, golf-clubs lying on the rear seat, before entering through the kitchen rather than where the customers arrived. Yet they would have no truck with the hierarchy which ruled the lives of waiters and restaurant managers. Bandleaders were even more arrogant, fawned upon by peers and debutantes. When somebody handed Ambrose a pound note and asked him to play a particular request, the note was handed back – wrapped inside a fiver.

For a while Sid Colin was a denizen of that world, strumming the guitar, sometimes singing (a couple of examples are there to haunt him on the Decca anthology). His success came afterwards and elsewhere, writing radio and TV scripts, which may be why he looks back without the sentimentality that creeps into the conversation whenever any group of old pros get together. He is appalled at the thought that anyone should want to bring the big bands back, yet remains an unabashed fan of the

irreverent throng that played in them. They laughed at everything, he says: at Geraldo's cockney accent, Maurice Winnick's conducting, the way Lew Stone (nicknamed Joe Clumsy) kept falling off the bandstand. They laughed, too, at things they admired, even records by Duke and Louis.

There was irony in the fact that men earning so much (£25 a week was a lot of money in 1935) should be asked to do so little, particularly as many were genuine virtuosi. But for a good deal of the time they just played stock arrangements of the latest show tunes from America, trumpets tightly muted, saxophones keeping a low profile. Spirits rose when the BBC brought in microphones: soloists perked up, special orchestrations were taken out, diners' chatter got drowned by the band instead of vice versa. Every night of the week (Sundays excepted), from 10.30 until midnight, the country at large eavesdropped on the Savoy, the Dorchester, the Mayfair, the Monseigneur.

Radio created the reputations which sold the records that now form the staple of the nostalgia market. There were exceptions, of course. Jack Hylton had pioneered the show band in the 1920s, touring the halls, mixing comedy and spectacle (in 1926 he had two horses, complete with jockeys, racing on-stage) with overweight arrangements. And there were the palais bands: Bertini within earshot of Blackpool's lions, Oscar Rabin presiding down at Hammer-smith. Nowhere is Sid Colin more poignant than when describing the frustration of musicians faced with an evening of Excuse Me Foxtrots, Spot Waltzes and the dithyrambic Paul Jones.

These splendours and miseries are captured fairly comprehensively by both the Decca and World Record anthologies. There are songs envisaging Aloha as a South Seas Islands beauty or glorifying sunset glimpsed from the saddle; lots of Latin and Latin-American tushery ('on her lips was a promise, in my heart was a prayer'); intrusions by accordions, Wurlitzer organs and what James Joyce never got round to calling the Hawailing catarrh. There are even (World Records, Vol. 7) samples of Americans in Britain and Britishers in America. For Americans dominated the early years: in 1919 the Original Dixielanders demonstrated jazz; in 1923 Paul Whiteman showed how gentility could cohabit with syncopated music.

Americans – Carroll Gibbons, Roy Fox, Charlie Kunz – led some of the bands. Americans – Sylvester Ahola, Danny Polo, even Rudy Vallee – played in many of them, until the Ministry of Labour got shirty. And although Bing Crosby never reached Britain in the Thirties his records certainly did. Hughie Diamond pays direct

homage in *Waterlilies In The Moonlight*, just as Maurice Winnick's saxophones, wobbling like blancmange in the background, owe a debt to Guy Lombardo's special brand of kitsch.

The simpler-minded, convinced that real singers should be able to project to the back rows, saw the crooner as a latterday eunuch. What had happened was that the beefiness of the Twenties was replaced by more intimate microphone techniques. Al Bowlly and Sam Browne, both genuine originals, turn up a lot on these LPs. Brian Lawrence, an Australian, inescapable on radio just before the war, oozes health and wholesomeness like a premature Pat Boone.

Hindsight merely confirms what most aficionados guessed at the time. The two finest working bands were those led by Lew Stone, an arranger, and Ambrose, a nonpareil at picking the right men although no great shakes as a performer himself (to a dowager duchess's question, 'Why don't you play the violin more often, Mr Ambrose?' he once replied: 'Probably because I'm nearer to it than you are, lady'). Ambrose's ensemble was more precise, Lew Stone's warmer. Ambrose chose better tunes (*One Morning In May*, for instance, or, before anybody else, *Body And Soul*); Lew Stone and his soloists – Nat Gonella, Lew Davis, Joe Crossman – did wonders with songs that few of us remember any more. Maybe Lew should have stopped his sidemen singing quite so much, but it was an engaging fault. And unlike Sam Browne or Al Bowlly – too good, too professional – their voices provide a sort of human roughage, the stuff that Archer Street used to be made of.

Television

Ian Hamilton

Heave Ho

According to the *Daily Mail*, the nerve-wracked Brian Walden was groping towards the close of his debut chat with Margaret Thatcher when a frantic *Weekend World* producer hissed into the novice's ear-piece: 'Walden, please, get tough!' Hence, we are told, the referendum headlines that dominated most of Monday's sheets, and a notable hit for Peter Jay's successor. Up to this crucial point, Walden had been competent, courteous and firm but somewhat too ready to back off whenever Thatcher pulled her grand-dame routine: 'Now wait just *one moment*; I want to get this absolutely clear.' He'd been urging her to tag along with *Weekend World's* cartoon 'scenario' of what would happen if the Tories were to find themselves in a climactic collision with the unions, and she had been hedging pretty successfully: there won't be any such collision, so why speculate? was her reiterated line. Walden's final triumph was that most people, I would think, went away with the impression that Thatcher had

come on to the programme determined not to give any clear answer to this most important of all questions. I myself had the feeling that the referendum reply was not especially thought-out; she might just as easily, under pressure, have said that she'd call in the troops. Even Walden didn't manage to get her to say what would ensue were there to be a popular vote deploring an all-out anti-Thatcher strike. She may indeed get a mandate from 'the people', but a mandate for what?

Still, one scoop a week will suit London Weekend very nicely, and they must have been well pleased with their new man. He was clearly nervous, has no idea how to smile, and there is something wrong with the way in which he vocalises large sections of the alphabet. The silliness of much of the show's presentation – cartoons galore, and most of them assuming zero political knowledge in the audience – simply doesn't suit his severe, ascetic style, and he'd also do well to ditch the shocking-blue terylene shirt he sported for the Maggie chat.

Thatcher herself, it should be added, was a formidable opponent; she can do what few politicians have a gift for – she can think while she's talking. And she is shrewdly making the most of her new internationalist image. Sentences are beginning to begin: 'As I go about the world . . .' Few human moments were discernible in this well-tailored session; once, though, Her Iciness came near to something like a girlish giggle: 'Ho ho, I've never seen anyone take Clive Jenkins to the cleaners as Hugh Scanlon did.' Well, maybe not ho ho, exactly, but provocatively close.

'He'll stop at nothing. What shall we do?' 'Nothing'. 'You mean, *nothing*?' 'Yes. You see, if we do nothing, he'll stop. If we do something, he won't stop.' This, if you can believe it, was one of the more trenchant moments in the John Cleese as Sherlock Holmes spectacular, *The End of Civilisation As We Know It* (LWT), a telly-obsessed update of the wise one's contest with the elusive Moriarty. Laboured farce-scenes contended with leaden verbal thrusts and the whole thing ought to have been an embarrassment to all concerned. For Cleese, an early holiday may be no bad thing; self-parody is lurking in the wings.

1990 (BBC-2) is the new Monday evening adventure and it was given an opening boost by having its first two parts shown on successive nights. It's the usual sub-Orwell mix, with technological noises from various sinisterly named bureaucracies setting about destroying our precious individual liberties. Edward Woodward is the incorruptible journalist who loathes the way things are going, and his one weakness is the adamant Sally Kellerman, who is high up in the thought-police. Woodward prints stories about Adult Rehabilitation Centres (hospitals for social misfits) when he is not assisting illegal emigrants to take up rewarding, free-spirited jobs in Arizona. America is mentioned frequently as the promised land where things that happen here don't happen; this patriotic strain will have to be watched carefully – essentially a boast (we'll lead the world once more, repression-wise) it is also a simple-minded right-wing whine. Much crowd-appeal.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Bad Trips

The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold *Royal Exchange, Manchester*
Macbeth *Warehouse*
Breezeblock Park *Mermaid*
The Belle of Amherst *Phoenix*

This week's good advice is very simple: don't swallow strange potions, whether they're prescribed by breezy GP's in sensible shoes or wild-eyed hags in ordure-smeared tatters. At the Warehouse, the ever-thrifty Trevor Nunn has made his Macbeth queasily imbibe the witches' rag-out of newts' eyes and Turkish noses, thus dispensing with the need for hiring all those apparitions and Scots kings. The stuff about Birnam stalking Triffid-like to Dunsinane becomes a hallucination, a bad trip, happening inside our hero's doped brainbox. And up in Manchester we have Evelyn Waugh, skimpily camouflaged as Gilbert Pinfold, finding an excuse for his shipboard psychosis in the chloral he was using to wash down his 'grey pills'. 'It sounds like a perfectly simple case of poisoning to me,' agrees the family doctor: one of the few lines Ronald Harwood has neglected to spirit out of the original novel and into his remarkably faithful adaptation. Perhaps he thought, and rightly so, that it was a rather banal explanation for two weeks spent being accused by ferocious voices of greed, cowardice, literary decadence, snobbery and sodomy: akin to ending one of those gatherings of suspects that customarily round off Christie thrillers with a description of Hercule Poirot whirling around and pointing a quaking finger at a bottle of nosedrops.

Still, with or without that particular line, it's the only explanation we're offered in Manchester. It isn't suggested that there's something about the personality of Waugh, or Pinfold, that makes him peculiarly susceptible to paranoid delusions; and this gap is mainly due to the playing of the protagonist. Now, I vastly admire Michael Hordern. I could happily spend hours watching him wince, twitch, scratch, bumble, and lament his frazzled lot with that famous 'aaaah' of his, part-wail, part-groan, part-baa, as from a distraught sheep. But he tends to shrink the crosspatch into the fusspot. The acidity and urbane bite of the *Face to Face* interview with Freeman, bits of which Harwood has transposed into his play, aren't really within his range; and he makes astonishingly little of what should surely be a *cri de coeur*, 'Why does everybody except me find it so easy to be nice?' Hordern is, in fact, too nice by half, or maybe three-quarters. He is not a man likely to be carried to the brink of Bedlam in an ecstasy of irritability and suspicion.

It is, I gladly concede, an achievement to make so introverted a novel work on the stage at all; and there are times when the

play's blend of visible and invisible nightmare works very well. The incredulity of Pinfold when he supposes a prim steward to be blasting off four-letter words, and the increasing discomfort of his fellow-passengers as he lightly mentions the scenes of menace and misery he has heard, are certainly most amusing. On the other hand, the second half's fantasies become repetitive, and the stage furniture seems unusually cumbersome for theatre-in-the-round. What's achieved by turning Pinfold's cabin into a brutalist sculpture, a tangle of chunky ventilation pipes, apart from obstructing our view? But the real trouble is, I fear, the admirable Mr Hordern. We're told, in the play as in the novel, that there's 'a triumph to be celebrated'. A man has revealed his terrors and his self-hatred; he has been sucked into his own foaming subconscious, and barely escaped drowning. The triumph is, perhaps, Waugh's triumph over the darker side of himself. It is a pity that too mild and mellow a principal actor should reduce it to little more than the conquest of an overcrowded medicine cabinet.

One of the many merits of Mr Nunn's *Macbeth* is that it isn't just a sad story of poisoning by satanic LSD. Ian McKellen's whey-faced regicide has seen it all, done it all, felt it all: we watch him disintegrate, pore by unwilling pore, and by the end we know something of what it means to have 'supped full with horrors'. But I raved over this painful case-study of mental and emotional suicide last year at Stratford, and I see no need to labour my admiration for Mr McKellen's capacity for moral self-exposure, or for Judi Dench's stricken Lady Macbeth, or for the very intimate and intense production. All that remains is to raise a thumb for the best Macduff and, consequently, the best scene of exile in England that I can recall. Bob Peck, charged with animating this notoriously unrewarding part, distinguishes aptly between grief for Scotland under the prospective tyranny of Malcolm and grief for a lost wife and family. The first is loud, tearful and physically demonstrative, the second still, cold and incredulous; and there's no doubting which is the deeper and more awful. Macbeth is killed by a man, not by some tweed-encrusted Dalek: in my view, a healthy shift of theatrical tradition.

Breezeblock Park is David Turner's *Semi-Detached* plus a compassionate coda. Most of the evening, Willy Russell, the dramatist responsible, is content to twit his housing-estate cabal for its envy, avarice and show; and he's pretty successful at communicating his exasperated amusement, especially when the local monster-in-chief mistakes a vibrator for a cocktail mixer, one of those plastic gadgets she makes it her life's work to hoard. But towards the end her seemingly invulnerable front cracks, broken by her daughter's determination to have her child out of wedlock and away from home, and she delivers herself of what's supposed to be a scathingly honest attack on her own pretensions and the grotty world that's forced them on her. All very fair-minded of Mr Russell; but the change of style and tone is hard to take, and there are other oddities militating against the ending's authenticity. Is it likely

that the liberating student who has fathered the pregnancy would promptly succumb to the blandishments of these suburban grotesques, and himself begin to represent domestic convention at its most stultifying? Mr Russell gives us no reason to suppose so, and the actor playing the part looks (as well he might) lost and hairily bewildered.

Wendy Craig, I should add, finds more in herself at the play's climax than my condescending view of her resources had led me to expect; but the week's performance by a woman is at the Phoenix, two-odd hours of Julie Harris, shyly cawing her way through the part of Emily Dickinson. It's something to hold an audience all alone for so long, something more when your subject did nothing but closet herself at home, bake cakes, think, write, and pine for publication, and something still more when your script is no great shakes. Inactivity (in short) raised to the level of delight.

Films

John Coleman

Killing Time

India Song (A) *Camden Plaza*
I Was Fifteen (X) *EMI International*
La Tête de Normande *St-Onge Canadian*
New Generation, NFT, 26 September

Marguerite Duras, the least interesting of a singularly dull and pretentious bunch of French writers which has for some time devoted itself to proving the novel is dead by writing dead novels, also meddles in the medium of film. It is to her we owe the gnostic nonsense of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, an event occasionally worth looking at but nothing to lend an ear to: there was also Peter Brook's *Moderato Cantabile*, another instant item for the cinema morgue. Subsequently, she has turned to making her very own movies: some ten of them to date, of which *India Song* (1975) has been – with a courage bordering surely on the suicidal – winkled out by Pam and Andi Engel as worthy of an NW1 viewing. Through circumstances not entirely beyond my control (I could have stayed away from that particular showing at a London Film Festival, and – I register with uncritical alarm – we are promised three more of the lady's visual constructs at the forthcoming LFF), I have slumped through *India Song* twice. It does not improve on closer acquaintance. To be fair to Mlle Duras, she is quotably her worst enemy: 'I make films to kill time. If I had the courage to do nothing, I'd do nothing . . . That's the most sincere thing I can say about my activities.' At this rare moment in time, reviewer and film-maker join hands. A more killing way with time – I talk about mine – it would be hard to conjure. Calcutta (maybe), 1937 (perhaps), a doomy love-affair (who knows?). That is the plot.

But against whom is it engineered? Delphine Seyrig, variously toggled out in black, white and red, stands about a great deal, mostly in mirror-shot, when she is not languorously dancing with indistinguishable men. She is the wife of the French ambassador. The hitherto excellent actor Michel Lonsdale somnambulates through as vice-consul at Lahore, currently disgraced and given to huge, midnight howls. Seyrig is shown in held poses, surrounded by heavily smoking blokes, for all the world as if she and they were advertising something saleable in the Thirties. Clothes, ciggies, or could it just be the quite catchy song of the title? To relieve the visual tedium (it looks as if it were shot in an aquarium in need of dusting), many voices say hinting, dislocated things over. Leprosy, heat and famines recur verbally, as well as a really successful non-sequitur about an Indian female who spent ten years trekking to the Ganges, losing a dozen children en route. The happening can only be there to tickle the mind if you believe in nothing. I think Marguerite Duras thinks, when she does, that all art has to start from scratch. I refuse to allow that she has done anything important, significant or new: the tiny, residual impression left by *India Song* is of a sad, stale odour attempting to pass itself off as a fresh scent. This may be enough for habitués of the Portobello Road and other Flea Markets, who will find meaning in the fall of a stuffed sparrow: and buy the thing.

Slightly more rewarding in a dreadful week is the Norwegian *I Was Fifteen*, directed – with more sympathy and address than the script deserves – by Knut Andersen. It coagulates around a pleasant-faced lad, Peter (Steffen Rothschild), who goes for a muddled, sexual summer hol to aunt and uncle in the country. Uncle is the original Nordic Seth, out of *Cold Comfort Farm*, very hairy and lounging off to undo another button. Aunt feeds Peter prune whip at unlikely hours and would rather not know about her man's extramural ploughings, one of which results in a suicide either spoilt by cutting or rubbish from the beginning. Meanwhile, nice Peter gets into what is offered: a younger lad who donates him a condom in a matchbox as an extra birthday present, the bewildering knickers of a big, plain girl, the friendly masturbation of a wanton with a baby who is having it off with uncle. It really isn't as awful as it sounds; albeit close to it.

The NFT is showing films from youngish Canadian directors. Having only seen the one that fortune, choice, or availability threw my way at a press show, I have to say it was not very good. In fact, apart from the mercifully central presence of Carole Laure as Normande, a cool, warm-mouthed beauty along the admirable lines of Jacqueline Bisset (my all-time pin-up), it is so ludicrous, what with the girl letting herself be put upon – by a deviant mum, a hick boyfriend, a magic near-queer, and a dirty old sculptor in the basement, to name only a few of the people-hazards she is assumed to take in her great stride – that it hardly comes as a surprise, or indeed much more than a yawn, when she goes picturesquely potty at the end. Gilles Carle made it. Other films in the season sound more rewarding.

Eric Sams

Maria Callas

Maria Anna Kalogeropoulos made her world entrance in New York in 1923, and her tragic exit in Paris last week. In between she dominated the opera houses of Europe and the Americas as if she had assumed the role, as well as the name, of Callas: la Divina. Her career falls into aliquot parts, like a three-act opera; a prologue, a brilliant entry and triumphant procession, and finally a sad withdrawal and departure. Next come the floral tributes, bearing such legends as 'Goddesses don't die'.

The destiny of the diva is thrice determined; by the quality of the voice, its training, and its owner's personality. The Callas organ was above all a great instrument, affectingly simple in its vox humana quality and yet, when all its stops were out, overwhelming. That range of registration gave it intense dramatic power. As a further formative contrast, it was classically trained in an Athens academy by a Spanish coloratura. Having explored the depths of all the standard roles of later Wagner and Verdi, Callas emerged to flash and sparkle in florid display. After her resplendent success as Elvira in *I Puritani* in 1949, she turned increasingly to bel canto; and, in doing so, impressed even those Germanic-depressive die-hards who find it hard to tell Bellini from baloney. As all could see and hear, her art had compellingly taken fire from her own passionate nature. At her best, for example as Puccini's Tosca, feeling and technique fused together. Her devotees still speak with exaltation of her unearthly ultra-Violetta radiance as Verdi's consumptive heroine in *La Traviata*, while the white-robed Bellinian purity of her superb Norma has been acclaimed as super-normal.

Very well, these are in a sense illusions; but they are nonetheless realities to those who experienced them, and for many opera-goers Maria Callas sounded miraculous. Yet it seems that some of her own ills and wounds stayed unhealed. Although she played many parts in her time, most were sad ones; and that time itself was all too short. Several of her favourite characters were not just hurt but bodily transfixed, like so many Butterflies. In an interview she once spoke of life as a predicament alleviated by human communication. Her detractors may seek to dismiss that pessimistic aesthetic as show-business Schopenhauer: and they can certainly point to a rich life, in every sense, spent among the world's greatest capitals, and capitalists. But it would be sentimental to see her as a bird in a gilded cage. She was no helplessly trilling Trilby, hypnotised by the Svengalis of wealth and power, no mere mercenary canary switched on by reflected light. Admittedly there were sizeable limitations; thus opera without Mozart, song without Schubert, are hardly the whole picture on any showing. But her art needed plenty of blank canvas on which to paint her own picture. When the stage is peopled

with lesser figures, even the grandest of opera can seem tiny and remote, as if viewed through the wrong end of the glasses. Conversely, the strength and vigour of the Callas presence and profile, suggesting a classical medallion, could make even small-scale and provincial music seem invested with her own imperious vitality.

It may well be that such conquests (and she has herself been quoted as comparing opera to a battlefield) made heavy demands on her own emotional reserves. The whole world knew of those quasi-operatic loves and feuds, so pitilessly and publicly was the curtain lifted on the prima donna's private acts and scenes. It must surely shorten the career, and perhaps even the lifespan, to burn up one's own substance thus. But that is exactly what stars have to do. The light of Callas, though now sadly attenuated and disembodied, is still powerful enough to travel and shine for many years yet.

Art

John Spurling

Mother Nature

Whistler and His Influence in Britain
Tate

Victor Pasmore: Recent Works 1974-77
Marlborough

Ian Hamilton Finlay: *Serpentine*

Whistler was the Clapham Junction of 19th-century painting. Into him ran the main lines of Courbet's realism and the Pre-Raphaelites' romanticism as well as the branch lines of *Japonnaiserie* and an idiosyncratic version (emanating not from Leighton or Alma-Tadema, but from a recluse called Albert Moore whom Whistler admired extravagantly) of Victorian neo-classicism. Out of him the lines rush on to Art Nouveau; Monet and Picasso's Blue Period; Sickert, Ben Nicholson and Pasmore; even perhaps to Rothko, Olitski and much of the progeny of Abstract Expressionism.

The Tate's small show (drawn, all but one Albert Moore, from its own collection) is a distinctly parochial salute to Whistler's importance. The nine paintings by the Junction himself include another version of the *Nocturne in Black and Gold* which caused Ruskin to fulminate about 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face', thereby bankrupting Whistler in the trial that followed. The Tate's version, far from flinging any paint, is almost invisible behind its glass and I suspect that the gallery's current dim-light policy (at the behest of their conservation man, the aptly named Lord Dunluce) is partly responsible for the muted impression all those influential paintings make. I doubt if anyone would argue that Whistler was a first-rate painter, but at least in the clear light at the top of the Fine Rooms in Somerset House (in the *London and the Thames* exhibition) he looks a lively one.

Also at the Tate is the *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge*, which was produced in evidence at the trial. To the judge's question, 'Are those figures on the top of the bridge intended for people?', Whistler replied, 'They are just what you like', thereby - 99 years ago - inaugurating that divorce of nature from art which has the descendants of Ruskin's public angrily averting their faces to this day.

Victor Pasmore, notorious for his conversion from Euston Road realism to abstraction in the 1940s, still finds it necessary to insist, in the catalogue to his show at the Marlborough, on 'the redundancy of the visual object'. His atmospheric landscape *The Quiet River: The Thames at Chiswick*, done three or four years before the change, is almost the only painting in the Tate's show directly influenced by Whistler's nocturnes. Most of Whistler's followers in Britain preferred to borrow from his less radical styles. 'To say to the painter that Nature is to be taken as she is, is to say to the player, that he may sit on the piano,' wrote Whistler. Here you can see them sitting on the piano in droves.

Pasmore's recent work, with titles like *Linear Symphony*, *Black Symphony* and *Black Development in Two Movements*, is still pursuing Whistler's repeated analogies with music. Colour is sparse and used atmospherically, as blotches of yellow with blurred edges or as a ground, which shades almost imperceptibly from cream to brown; several paintings are done on board made of compressed shavings, giving an oatmeal texture to the ground; there is also a delicate use of relief and of small projections or holes in the board. Framing is as important to Pasmore as it was to Whistler: the board paintings are set in the middle of shallow white boxes, while the thin canvases are stuck on to panels of brown, grained wood, sometimes heavily varnished.

All this is, as it were, the *basso continuo* for the lines, which range from dense black horizontal motifs (with either rocky or liquid connotations according to the firmness or otherwise of their outlines); through bone-like structures made up of dots and dashes; and configurations of curves and straights (sometimes incised in the board); to spidery calligraphic scribbles which culminate in the artist's initials (shades of Whistler's equally intrinsic butterfly motif). The lines and the splashes of colour often spill over the edge of the board or canvas on to its surround. However dry these paintings may look and however simple their basic elements, it is clear that the expressive possibilities are immense. Where Whistler could say that 'nature contains the elements, in colour and form, of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of all music', Pasmore can claim that the piano is inside his own head: he is no longer dependent on nature even for the notes. Yet there are dry paintings and the cause is perhaps to be found in Pasmore's curiously old-fashioned insistence on the importance of abstraction. Having made the traumatic break with Whistler's Nature, he is unable to forget that he was a bondman. He's proud of his freedom, still talking about it, but he doesn't entirely enjoy it.

With Ian Hamilton Finlay, Whistler's

wheel has come full circle. Finlay, who began as a poet, has increasingly devoted himself to repairing the divorce between art and nature. Since art was the deserter, it art that must go out and re-attach itself to nature. Finlay's chief canvas - it can be glimpsed in colour slides at the Serpentine is his Lanarkshire garden which he has filled with inscribed sundials, flag-stones and other conceits, including stone bird-tables carved like aircraft-carriers. The inscriptions may have the effect of re-absorbing nature itself into an artistic tradition - such as the stone bearing Dürer's monogram placed in front of the natural replica of Dürer's famous watercolour of a piece of turf - or turf words into images which are themselves metaphors - as in the piece of aluminium script 'barque' flowing over a sea of flowers - or they may make two images overlap as in the black slab of slate shaped like the conning-tower of a nuclear submarine, set against a small lake and inscribed *Nuclear Sail*. Finlay's simple ideas - their charm and sometimes their force is in their simplicity - are necessarily somewhat overemphasised by exhibition. They are less for looking at than for looking over or through, sly nudges to the mind. Indeed the objects themselves whether prints, tiles, stone carvings, embroidery, neon signs or bronze fibreglass tortoises inscribed 'Panzerleader', are all made by various collaborators. But as an antidote to Art for Art's Sake, Finlay is your man. I'm surprised he hasn't yet made a punning inscription out of Whistler's reply to the judge.

Ballet

Oleg Kerensky

Casting About

Roland Petit's *Ballets de Marseille* Palladium
Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet Sadler's Wells
London Festival Ballet Festival Hall

Roland Petit's very 'French' *Coppélia* was more indulgently received by my colleagues than it deserved, and less enthusiastically received by the public than it was hoped. With Petit himself doing conjuring tricks and dancing an Astaire waltz with a doll attached to him, with soldiers doing slow-motion Keystone Cop marches and with a new plot allegedly involving the three principal characters in an eternal triangle, the whole concoction might have seemed ideal for the Palladium. But Ezio Frigerio's grey barrack square suggests *Carmen* rather than a folk-tale and provides a drab background, quite unsuited to Delibes' jolly music. Among the soldiers and their molls, Swanilda, Franz and the dolls look like intruders from another ballet - *Coppélia* perhaps? The new story makes no sort of sense. It was not helped on the first night by Loipe Araujo, a Cuban ballerina who seemed charmless and miscast and whose technique was sometimes strong, sometimes discon-

certingly inadequate. Mireille Bourgeois, an enchanting 17-year-old, was infinitely preferable on the second night but by then Petit's chorus-line choreography looked even thinner.

I turn with gratitude and relief to the real *Coppélia* at Sadler's Wells, though there too Maina Gielgud, making an obvious effort to be coquettish and amusing, was quite miscast as Swanilda. Margaret Barbieri was again wholly captivating in the role, and David Ashmole is now an outstandingly likeable and nimble Franz.

Notre-Dame de Paris, Petit's second offering, is an improvement on his first, if only because it is original, not a mangled classic. Staged 12 years ago as a grand spectacle at the Paris Opera, it obviously loses a lot on tour. Maurice Jarre's music is trite but theatrical and most of the choreography is banal, but the melodrama comes across excitingly when the leading roles are strongly played. Once again, this was not the case on the first night, but when Petit took over Quasimodo, Richard Duquenois appeared as a handsome but sinister Frolo and Loipe Araujo came into her own as a vivacious Esmeralda, things looked up.

Miscasting seems to be widespread just now. At Sadler's Wells, stars like Barbieri and Ashmole were unscheduled for the first two press nights, and the opening Balanchine programme was led by experienced but less charismatic artists. Desmond Kelly and Vyvyan Lorraine act and dance well in *Prodigal Son* but lack physical allure and emotional intensity. *Concerto Barocco* was competent but dull; *The Four Temperaments* has more obvious content and therefore suits these dancers better.

Balanchine's old story ballets are still modern and effective, as Festival Ballet also reminded us with *Night Shadow*. Almost a perfect example of what a short ballet should be, with its blend of emotion, drama, divertissements and lyrical pas de deux, it had Elisabetta Terabust as one of the best Sleepwalkers I've seen. Terabust and Evdokimova alternated in *Giselle*, to which they are both well suited, and Peter Schaufuss, on loan from New York City Ballet, is now an outstanding Albrecht. Beryl Grey can be proud of her principals.

are being shuttered up (the old butler limping down the hill), yachts and houseboats are being moored, private jets are being hangared, and Heathrow is in its usual yearly turmoil: our talented Competitors, after the summer recess, are returning from all points of the globe, their steps springy, their eyes asparkle. The Complex is buzzing; the comp casket swells; Fat Jeff slips a disc climbing from the scenic elevator. Greetings, in particular, to Bowling, Khan, Wandrhyn J. Bonso, Peterson, Sharpless, Corleone, Watson, Baird; £7 each to the winners.

Mathieu's Song from *The Age of Reason*

Oh what a lacklustre morning,
Oh what a tedious day,
Oh what a phlegmatic feeling,
Everything's dismal and grey.
There's a treatise on Kant in my left hand,
And a cheap beaujolais in my right;
There's a student of mine who is sharing
my bed,
A gauloise in my mouth I'm too idle
to light . . .
Oh what a lacklustre morning etc. . .

T. HOPE

Grendel's Song from *Goldgivers of 533 A.D.*

He come over the whale-road in a big boat,
Drank up all the mead in old Heorot
(Beowulf come an' I wanna go home).
I creep over the fens an' break down the door,
An' eat up a Thane lying pissed on the floor
(Beowulf come an' I wanna go home).

Up jumps the ring-lord an' grabs at my wrist,
Off comes my arm in a half-nelson twist
(Beowulf come an' I wanna go home).

So off I slope back to Mammy's old cave,
To tick the big fire-drake on Beo the Brave

(Beo-Beo-Beowulf an' I wanna go home).

A. H. RONALD

Schmoedipus

Oh why did I shack up with Momma?
That's the question that's bound to perplex!
There's bin more'n whimpers up there
in Olympus,
For mommas weren't made to have sex -
No way!

No momma is fit for a lay!

I didn't intend to kill pappy,
He was jest a strange guy at the time,
But ol' Goddy Zeus says that's no excuse,
You must take the rap for your crime.
No way!

Only war makes killin' okay!

I sure didn't mean to do wrong,
But I gotta get outa this place!
Now lil ol' Thebes gives me heebie-jeebies,
Could I stay with egg on my face?

No way!

I'm off on a blind right away!

E. O. PARROTT

Roots!; based on *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*. An excerpt from the show-stopping *O's Song*:

Oh never mind your P's and Q's
When I'm around for you to use!
An orgy only gets to start
When big O takes the leading part:
It doesn't pay to leave me out,
One Count who did's now up the spout.
Without me vice can have no voice -
I make a man moan by my choice.
And when I switch on to reverse
The course of love becomes a curse:
The girl I help to make her hero
Soon learns I also wind up zero.

W. J. WEBSTER



Tony Miles

Chess

No 52

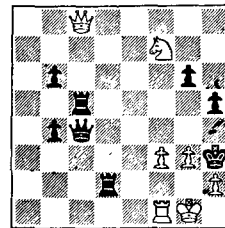
Larsen's Tenacity

The Vidmar Memorial tournament, held in Ljubljana and Portoroz, is one of the strongest annual events of Eastern Europe. This year it was won by the Danish GM Bent Larsen with 9½/13. I mention the tournament in order to be able to publish the following game, surely one of the most spectacular of recent years. It was played in the penultimate round, with Larsen desperately needing to win to have a chance of first prize.

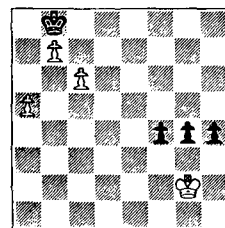
White: M. Yelen

Black: B. Larsen

1. N-KB3, P-QN3; 2. P-KN3, B-N2; 3. B-N2, P-QB4;
4. P-B4, P-N3, 5. O-O, B-N2; 6. P-Q4, P x P;
7. N x P, B x B; 8. K x B. The exchange of light-squared bishops enhances white's control of Q5, but slightly weakens his K-side, particularly the KR3 square. Larsen exploits this weakness in startlingly original manner. Read on! 8. . . . N-QB3;
9. N-B2. After this white cannot claim any advantage from the opening, but if 9. B-K3, N-B3 with the annoying threat of N-KN5. 9. . . . R-B1; 10. N-K3, N-B3; 11. N-B3, O-O; 12. R-QN1, P-K3; 13. P-N3, P-Q4! Battle commences. 14. P x P, N-QN5;
15. B-R3, P-QR4; 16. Q-Q2, N-N5; 17. N(B3)-Q1, N x Nch; 18. N x N, B-B6; 19. Q-Q1, R-K1;
20. B x N, P x B; 21. Q-Q3, R-B4; 22. P x P, Q-R1ch; 23. K-N1, R x P; 24. QR-Q1, Q x P;
25. Q-Q8ch, K-N2; 26. N-Q5, Q x NP; 26. N-K7, Q-B5! Ever optimistic (26. . . . R x N was safer) Larsen provokes a remarkable king hunt. 27. Q-N8ch, K-B3; 28. Q-R8ch, K-N4. Not K x N, 29. Q-Q8 mate. 30. Q-KB8, R x P. With admirable coolness black snaffles another pawn. At this stage the reader may begin to suspect how Larsen intends to occupy the weak KR6 square (see note to move 8). 31. N-N8, P-R4; 32. N-R6, B-Q7. Keeping the white rooks at bay. 33. N x Pch? Here white could cause more trouble with 33. R x B, R x R; 34. P-R4ch, K-B3; 35. R-K1! P-KN4 (forced); 36. Q-R8ch, K-N3; 37. N-N8 and the black king will not live long (37. . . . K-B4; 38. Q x P). Understandably, however, white was running short of time. 33. . . . K-N5; 34. R x B. White has a bright idea! 34. . . . R x R; 35. P-B3ch, K-R6; 36. Q-B8ch! (See board!) The point — 36. . . . R x Q; 37. N-N5



is mate. Applause from the Yugoslav crowd — Larsen was unimpressed. 36. . . . Q-N5!! 37. N-N5ch, R x N; 38. P x Q, R-N7ch; 39. K-R1, R-QB4! A small finesse. Not 39. . . . R x Pch first, as white reaches the time control safety with 40. K-N1! 40. Q-Q8? The decisive error. On 40. Q-Q7 black must be content with a draw. 40. . . . R x Pch; 41. K-N1, P-KN4! Here white sealed 42. R-QN1 (if 42. Q-KR8, (R(B4)-B7; 43. Q x Pch, K-N6 wins) but resigned without further play since 42. . . . R(B4)-B7 (threatening R(B)-N7ch) regains the Queen with an easy ending. This is one of those games that somehow seems to be improved by the mistakes. A remarkable triumph for Larsen's will to win.



Solution to Problem 49

1. . . . R x RPI 2. P x R, N-B6ch; 3. K-N2, Q x KP;
4. K-R1, N-K8ch; 5. P-B3, R x P; 6. K-N1, R-N6ch Resigns.

Solution to Problem 50

White wins. 1. P-B7, R-N8; 2. B-N8! and if K x B 3. P-B8=Qch or R-B8ch 3. B-B4.

Weekend Competition

No 2482

Set by Tim Hopkins

The *Sunday Times* has mercifully suspended its 'One Man's Week' column, in which various sub-celebrities attempted to give the flavour of their (often distasteful) lives. We can, therefore, safely invite Dr Johnson, Geoffrey Chaucer, Lord Byron, etc, for their contributions to the series. 150 words by 7 October.

Result of No 2479

Set by Lean Jono

Anna Karenina is to be made into a musical. We wanted an aria from this or any similar adaptation.

Report

by Little Keith

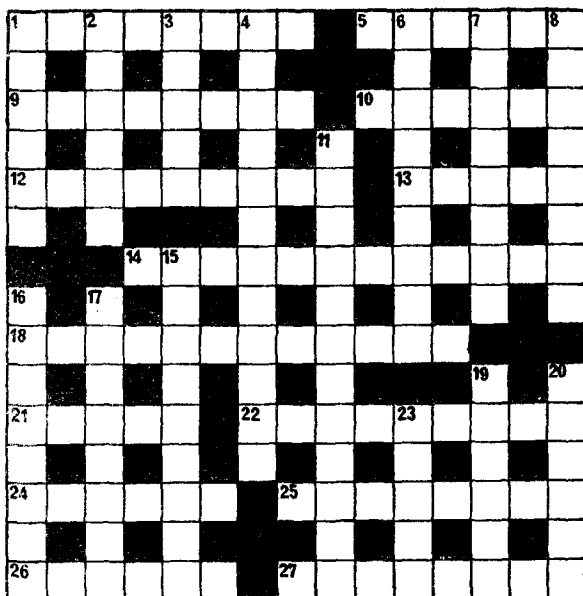
It's started happening again. Summer chalets

Problem 52

Two parts: (a) black to play and (b) white to play. In each case what result and why? Answers to me at the NS post-marked not later than 5 October.

Weekend Crossword 1234

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1234, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 4 October.



ACROSS

- Painting like a hat in a seat (8).
- Is sorry but there is no river for the waders (6).
- Unsafe although possibly nice and sure (8).
- I start and then I enter points for fools (6).
- Entertainment for which one needs to use the map on time (9).
- The fat are to be seen without number (5).
- The second and third letters? (6, 6).
- Convert one to scholarly subject (5, 7).
- Spike which helps to keep Ron going fast (5).
- A girl struck but not put out of countenance (9).
- Had a meal after the hotel was not acquired (6).
- Some arithmetic for the troops (8).
- The elopement scene would be pointless if the woman were discovered (6).

- Separates into component parts as sanely as possible (8).

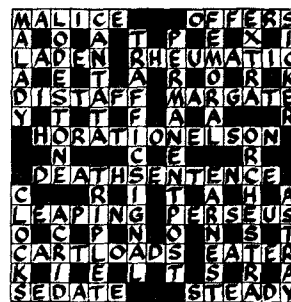
DOWN

- Spare devil in the heavens (6).
- Agreement would be an advantage if the north were left out (6).
- Chocolate source (5).
- Father goes to town with us but without the boy, being mean (12).
- Leave with foreign currency and different benefactress (9).
- Tie score broadcast although it is not for broadcasting (8).
- Religious groups hold us quietly as possible criminals (8).
- Window arrangement obtained from allotment behind iron home (12).
- Then Nigel is converted and free from prejudice (9).
- Sign of approval although caught taking the milk? (8).
- Gone mingling with curs to cage (8).

- Furniture with fibres inside it (6).
- A handsome fellow make trouble the reverse of ev (6).
- Spirit in which I fear I elected a tory (5).

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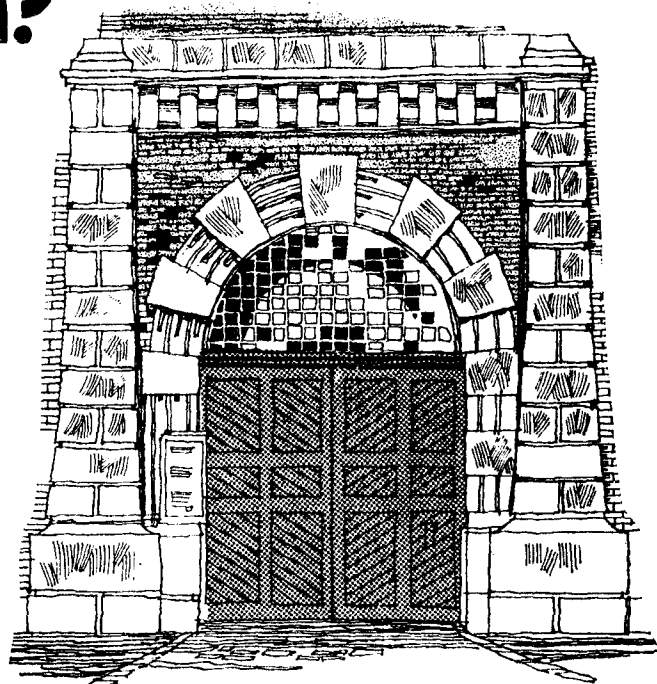
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Vol. 94 No. 2427

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE (Royal Shakespeare Company), 836 6404. Recorded booking info: 836 5332. 'Troilus and Cressida', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'The Comedy of Errors', 'Pillars of the Community' in repertoire. See daily press for dates and times. RSC also at 'The Warehouse' at Donmar Theatre, Week of 25 Sept: 'Macbeth', Brecht's 'Schweyk', Howard Barker's 'That Good Between Us' and C. P. Taylor's 'Bandits'. And at Piccadilly Theatre in 'Wild Oats', and Savoy Theatre in 'Man and Superman'.

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NATIONAL THEATRE, 928 2252. 'Volpone', 'The Madras House', 'State of Revolution', 'Bedroom Farce', 'The Passion' & 'Judgment'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded info: 928 2256.

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Meetings

FOCUS GROUP invites you to join Peter Hain when he discusses 'Sport and the Commonwealth' at 6.30 p.m. Monday 26 September, admission 25p. Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Ave, WC2, 930 6733.

LONDON ASSEMBLY for disarmament and Peace will take place on 28/29 January 1978. Sponsored by a large number of Peace and Church organisations and Trade Unions. Further details from 29 Great James Street, London WC1N 3EY. Please keep this date free.

RESEARCH INTO LOST KNOWLEDGE Organisation, Central Library, Kensington, Phillimore Walk, W8. Prof. William Thompson, Lindsarfe Association, New York. Rediscovery of the village scale in a meta-industrial age. Mr Keith Pritchlow arranging complimentary talk Thurs. 29 Sept. 1977. 6.45 for 7 p.m. Tickets £1.00 with refreshments. Write Mrs Jackson, 36 College Court, Hammersmith, W6. (Tel.: 01-748 5506).

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. John Trevelyan, formerly of the British Board of Film Censors, on 'Censorship, Democracy and Democracy' 28 Sept. 7.30 p.m. 62 Marchmont St, WC1. All welcome. Collection.

THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH SOCIETY holds its AGM on Saturday 1 October 7.30 p.m. at Bedford College, Regent's Park. All welcome. Inquiries: 01-262 5697.

THE BIRTH CENTRE: HAYA OAKLEY, Psychotherapist, Philadelphia, Ascot, Bucks. Talk & discussion 'After the Birth' 29 Sept. 7.30 p.m. 188 Old St, EC1. 21 at door.

THEOSOPHY. Informal Forum on Basic Theosophy, Sun, 25 Sept. 8 p.m. All welcome. S.a.e. for free literature and book list, ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2.

PRIVATE TENANTS & Long Leaseholders. Sixth Conference of Private Residents Associations on Saturday 5 November at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Details from Secretary, 15 Cecil Mansions, London SW17 7QN. Vital policy lobby to be launched.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, Blind Lane, Bourne End, Bucks. (Tel. 06285 26464). Sun. 25 Sept. Swami Bhavananda on 'The Narada Bhakti Sutra' at 4 p.m. All welc. Vedanta mag. 40p.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Sat. 24 Sept. 3 p.m. 'Open Day'. Tues. 27 Sept. 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full programme.

LIVING YOGA. New series talks on Yoga mind-training every Thursday 7 p.m. at YWCA, 16 Great Russell St, WC1 begins 29 Sept. Admission free. Details from Shanti Sadan, 29 Chepstow Villas, W11.

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Courses continued on p. 427

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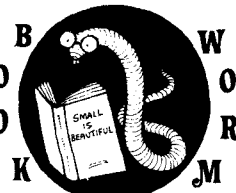
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